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BRADLEY'S WONDER BOX STORIES

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The Wonderbox Stories

The Wonderbox Stories

By
Will Bradley

New York
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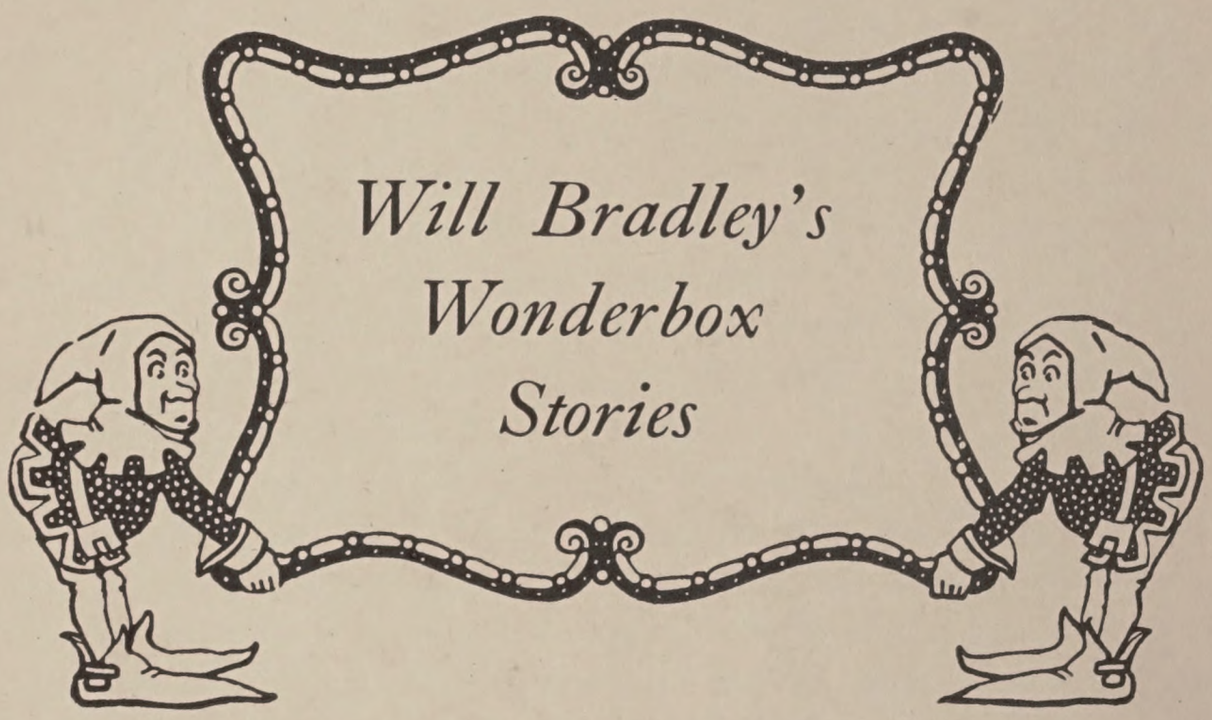

Will Bradley's
Wonderbox
Stories

Much *from Little*

ONE fine day in June there was such a stir in Noodleburg as had not been seen in that town for many a day: a herald astride a big white charger was riding up one street and down another and all the while blowing a gay tune upon his bugle.

When the people had come from out their houses and had followed that herald into the market-place, he turned his horse about, and this is what he said: "In a land over the hills away, there is a King who is looking for a husband for the Princess; but the Princess has vowed and declared how she will never marry unless she is brought a dress, the finest in all the world, into the making of which there has gone no sorrow and nothing save kindness. So the King decrees that whoever will bring such a dress may have the Princess, and half the kingdom to boot."

Yes, that was what the herald said in the market-place of Noodleburg that day in June.

As you may well guess, this set the people's tongues to wagging, and it was n't long before a word or two came to the ear of the Provost. How he did chuckle when he heard what the King intended to give away!

This is why the Provost chuckled. He thought: "Surely there are no lads in all the land smarter than the two I have

at home. I will fit them out with this, that, and the other, and off they shall go to find the dress. If one of them finds it not and fails to win the Princess, then must she surely fall to the lot of the other."

It did n't take long then for the Provost to get the lads ready. Unto each he gave a fine suit of clothes for his back, a bag of silver pennies to tie at his belt, and a good steed for the journey.

This was all right and good, said the two sons, but who ever heard of any one riding out to win a Princess with no servant to wait upon him — to brush his clothes, hold his stirrup, and dance here, there, and yonder, as might be need.

Now the Provost was close-fisted and stingy, and he could n't hear the silver pennies jingling in the two bags without making a wry face over the matter. But if the two lads must have a servant, why of course they must; only they could n't each have one; no, there must be one for the two. And see how would Brother Hans's boy, Peter, do?

Well, since that was all the sauce there was to that pudding, why they must make the best of it; so if the Provost would send for Peter they would be getting along on their journey.

Brother Hans was a poor wood-chopper living at the edge of the Black Forest over beyond Noodleburg. As for Peter, if one was to say he had enough to eat each day, but no more, and one suit of clothes to his back, and no other, that would be only the bare truth.

Yes, Peter could ride with the Provost's two sons. Hans would n't say no to that offer, for perhaps the lad could earn a penny or two and see a bit of the world into the bargain.

So the Provost's sons bestrode their fine steeds, and Peter mounted a little donkey, and off they started.

Up one street and down another they went, and by and by came out upon the highway. All day they traveled with the good sun warm upon their backs, and the birds singing by the wayside, arriving, when it was nearly evening, at a big town that lay just over the hills.

" Do you go ahead, Peter, and get us lodging for the night at some inn," said the older son.

" And a good supper, mind you! " said the younger.

Peter let his little donkey run at a smart gallop, and presently came into the town and saw before him a fine inn with lights in every window and with the savor of meats a-cooking coming out of the open door.

Just across the way was another inn, not so big by one half as that fine one, yet a neat and tidy-looking place withal, and as good, indeed, as any there were back in Noodleburg.

At first Peter was for going into the fine inn, and he said, " Surely, this is the sort of place they will be wanting." Then he glanced over the way. " But if they are of a mind to be saving their pennies," he thought, " then it is the other they would choose. I had best get them lodging there."

Across the way he went then, and no sooner was the matter settled with the landlord than up the street came the two sons.

So Peter thought they wanted to stop at the little inn, did he? And when there was such fine entertainment to be had across the way? Well, if that was how he was going to do their bidding, why, he could go without his supper; it was high time he was taught a lesson. If he wanted a bed, he

The Three Start upon a Journey.

would have to look for one in the stable. That is what the two sons told him. As for them, they would certainly lodge in the big inn.

Off Peter went with his donkey and the two horses; and when he had fed them, he shook down a little straw for their beds, then curled up in a corner and went to sleep.

Whatever happened that night with the Provost's two sons is more than I can tell. But it must have been a jolly time they were having, for never a minute passed when there was not flying out of the open windows a sound of singing and laughter.

On the morrow Peter was up early, and, when he had fed and saddled the horses, there was such a noise and stir in the stable-yard that he must needs go and see what it was all about.

No sooner did he get outside the door than he saw three stout lads with stones and sticks in their fists tormenting a little green frog, while they shouted and laughed in great glee.

"Here is a game another can play at," said Peter. And in a moment he, too, had a stick in his fist and was wielding it as well as the best of them. But it was n't the frog that felt Peter's blows; he was dusting the jackets of the three lads with such warm whacks that he who received one was glad to avoid another.

While the lads were scampering away (which they did as fast as their legs could carry them), the frog escaped also.

When Peter had led the horses around into the street, there was the landlord of the little inn standing smiling in the doorway.

"Good morning, lad," said the landlord.

"Good morning, sir," said Peter.

And now would Peter come over the way a moment? The landlord had a word or two the lad might be glad to hear.

See? The landlord had heard how Peter got no supper the night before, and how he was like to get no breakfast; here was a bit of bread and cheese he might slip into his pocket to eat by the way. And, since the landlord liked the looks of such a lad as Peter, here was something more, which no doubt would come in handy some day. With that he dropped into Peter's hand a tiny silver casket.

"How long is our servant going to keep us waiting?" These were the words of the older son when he came out of the inn and saw Peter over the way. "And what can be in that little silver casket the lad has just slipped into his pocket?" That was what the older son was wondering. But of this he said nothing.

All that day they traveled under the good blue sky and at evening came into another town.

Peter knew better what to do this time, for had n't he been taught a good lesson yesterday? There would be no trying to save pennies now.

This time he chose the fine inn; and gay times they certainly were having inside, for every guest was a rich lord or noble, journeying on to the King's town, where each hoped to be the one to win the fair Princess.

Well, no sooner had Peter begun his bargaining with the landlord than up the street came clattering the two sons.

So Peter was for putting them in this fine inn, was he? Did n't he know they had spent nigh all their money in the last inn? No, they would go to the small one over the way.

As for Peter, why it was plain he would never learn how to serve them. He had best find a bed in the stable again, and get no supper into the bargain. The two sons had no pennies

Gay Times.

left to waste on such a stupid lad; and anyway, he needed another lesson.

This night there was such a throng of travelers in the

town, that, with all their servants and lackeys to be housed, there was not so much as an inch of room to spare, even in the stable.

A sheltered nook in the lee of a big rock was the only place that Peter could find. "I am in great luck to get such a fine bed," said he, for the night was warm, and he did not mind having no more above his head than the twinkling stars.

No sooner did Peter have his jacket rolled up for a pillow, than he saw that another had occupied his nook before him. "Oh, ho!" said he, "if I sleep here, I am to have a spider for my bedfellow, am I? He has spun a fine web, too. It would be a shame to spoil what has cost him so much hard labor. I will just find me a new bed."

On the morrow, when Peter stood with the horses before the little inn, the landlord stepped out of the door of the fine inn over the way.

Would Peter be good enough to step across the street? The landlord had something he would say to him. See? The landlord had heard how Peter had no supper the night before, and how they would give him no breakfast. Here was a bit of roast chicken he might tuck into his pocket to eat by the way. And — it was good to have a look at a fine lad like Peter — here was a little gold casket he might have; it would come in handy some day.

"Well, well, well! we can't be waiting here all day for our servant to come and hold our stirrups," is what the younger son said when he came out of the inn and saw Peter talking with the landlord over the way. But all the while he was thinking: "I wonder what can be the contents of that little gold casket?"

Just then the elder son came out of the inn. He had paid the score and there was not one penny left to jingle against another in either of the two bags. Nothing remained now but for Peter to sell the donkey. It would never do for the Provost's two sons to ride to the King's town with not a penny upon them to buy a night's lodging or to get a bit to eat by the way.

When the donkey had been sold and the pennies counted into the two bags, the two sons mounted their fine steeds and left Peter to trudge on afoot. How the two were ever going to get the dresses that would win the Princess they did not know. "We must trust to luck," they said.

"Ho, Brother," grumbled the older son, "we are getting on but slowly; we must ride double. I will take our servant on my horse for away, then 't will be your turn."

Not long did they ride before the older son must know a thing or two about the silver casket; and in the end, there it was snug in his pocket. Such trinkets were not for servants, he said. Peter should have handed it over in the beginning; it was very plain he needed another lesson, so he must get down and walk.

"H'm! Well, we will never get to the King's town at this rate," said the younger son. "'Needs must when need drives.' Come, fellow, get up with me."

Peter mounted before the younger son. As it happened before, so it happened now. They had not gone far before Peter was paying well for his ride, and this time with the gold casket. After that, it was n't long until Peter was again on the ground with no more to bear him on his journey than his two good legs.

Now that they had the two caskets, the Provost's sons were of no mind to have their journey delayed any longer by their servant; so, putting spurs to their horses, they went galloping off down the road with never so much as one "good-by" to Peter.

Yes, the Provost's two sons went clattering off and left Peter alone on the highway.

Over the hills they rode and through the valleys, and by evening came to the town where the King lived. There they sold their horses and took lodgings.

As may well be guessed, no sooner was the older son alone in his room than he must be taking a peep at the silver casket. My, how he did skip and dance and caper about when he saw what was inside! For no sooner did the lid spring open than he beheld neither more nor less than a beautiful silk dress. All of the color of spun silver, it was, and so finely woven that not one little bit did it get wrinkled from being confined in the tiny casket. That he would win the Princess with such a dress as that, the older son never once doubted.

While the older son was busy with the silver casket, the younger son was having a peep into the gold casket; what he found there was another dress as like to that silver one as two peas in a pod, only that the color was like unto spun gold.

"There can be no dress one half so beautiful as this," said the younger son, "and now the Princess will surely be mine."

In the morning the two sons started off to the palace. Each carried in his pocket one of the tiny caskets, and in his mind the thought that when he was next traveling that way it would

be the Princess he 'd have at his side and not his brother; and that he would be riding in the King's finest coach and not kicking his toes in the dust with all the common folks.

When at last they came to the palace, there were the King and Princess seated on a high platform, and before them a long line of noble suitors, each bearing his beautiful gift.

If ever a lady wanted to see fine dresses, she should have been in the King's town on that day, for never before nor since has there been such a sight.

At the very end of the line, the Provost's two sons had to wait nearly the whole day, it took the Princess so long to judge. Some of the gowns were so lovely it seemed as if she surely must choose one of them, but always, when she looked carefully, there was to be found a thread of sorrow that had gone somewhere into their making.

At last up stepped the older son.

My, but the Princess did like that gown in the silver casket, and no mistake! Look as hard as she would there was not to be found in it one single thread of sorrow. Yet she could n't quite decide; the Provost's older son was just to be seated beside her, and she would take a look in the gold casket.

Up stepped the younger son. A fine gown it was that came out of the gold casket and no two words on that! and now it was harder deciding than ever. If the silver gown was beautiful, certainly it was no more so than the gold one; neither was the gold more beautiful than the silver; never one single stitch of sorrow could the Princess find in either. As for choosing, she just could n't that night; the Provost's two sons would please be kind enough to wait until the morrow;

and now she would be glad to have them come up to the palace for supper.

Meanwhile what had happened to Peter?

No sooner had the Provost's two sons left him alone on the highway, than Peter began to wonder whether it was best to go on or turn back. Then he said, "Surely, if I may not ride, I can at least go afoot, and no doubt there will be fine sights to be seen in the King's town." So, right foot forward, off he started.

A long way Peter traveled, and presently there he was, so tired and hungry he could n't go another step. Then he sat down on a rock and felt in the corner of one pocket and found a little bread and cheese, and in the corner of the other and found a bit of roast chicken; and that was n't the worst meal that might be, either.

When Peter had finished eating, he saw that there were a few ants running here and there upon the ground, so he shook them the crumbs from off his lap, and, getting to his feet, started again on his journey.

A little breeze was singing in the tree-tops, and the great white clouds were tumbling overhead as the lad went trudging along. Over hills he traveled and through dales, all of that day and all of the next, arriving at the King's town just at the dusk of evening.

What a buzz there was in the streets, what excitement, and how people were talking! "What is it all about?" That was the first question Peter had to ask.

Why just this; there had come two smart lads from Noodleburg, with two fine caskets containing two beautiful dresses. They were up at the palace now, having supper with the

Princess. Which one of the two she would be choosing to have for her husband was more than ever a body could tell. But 't would be one or t' other, that was sure and certain.

When Peter heard this, off he started for the palace. "Now," said he, "is the time they will be needing a servant to brush their clothes and wait upon them while they are visiting the Princess."

No, Peter could n't enter the palace. That 's what the guard told him when he reached the front gate. Such a thing was not to be thought of. The King was n't for having a poor lad like Peter about while the Princess was at supper with her two fine suitors. Peter must be locked in the guard-house for the present — that would surely save trouble. "There is no telling," said the guard, "what tricks a lad like you might be up to."

A hard bench in the guard-house was all Peter had for his bed that night; but he was too tired to mind it one particle and slept as soundly as might be.

In the morning early, when he awoke, he jumped up and said: "I will just be tidying up a bit to pay for my night's lodging."

In one corner was a pile of sweepings. "I will clean this up first," said he, as he started to brush it into the dust-pan.

Now, at the very bottom of the pile there was hiding a little green frog.

"Oh, ho!" said Peter, when he saw the frog winking and blinking up at him, "so I have spoiled your house, have I? Well, that is too bad, but perhaps you can find a better one

outside." Then he stooped to pick up the little creature, intending to put it out at the door.

No sooner did Peter touch the frog with the tip of his finger, than lo, a most wonderful thing happened! With a hop and a bound the frog jumped right out of its skin and off through the open window.

And the skin that it left on the floor?

Ah, that was a skin no longer; it was now a beautiful green suit, all of silk and velvet.

It took Peter only a minute to see that this suit was intended for him, and only another minute to get it upon his back. A fine suit it was, too; there were not many tailors could make a fit like that every day. Not one single kink or wrinkle was there anywhere; and as for looks, never Prince in all the realm wore clothes so beautiful.

Peter opened the door and walked out, and the guard never even said "Boo." The guard thought Peter to be some fine noble, and doffed his cap and bowed very politely.

Presently there was a blare of trumpets, and out of the gate came the King mounted on a fine charger, and beside the King rode the Princess, as sweet and lovely a little lady as ever one would care to see. Back of the Princess came the Provost's two sons, bearing the two caskets, and back of these many lords and ladies.

The Princess looked about here and there, bowing to one and nodding to another, until presently her eyes fell upon Peter. If any one were to say that sight pleased her, it would be to tell what was no more than the truth.

When the King and the Princess had mounted the platform and were seated in their great gilded chairs, the King

called forward the Provost's two sons with their gold and silver caskets, and he said: "Willy-nilly, the Princess must now take her pick of one of these, for she has vowed and declared she would marry whoever brings her a dress, the finest in all the world, into the making of which there had gone no sorrow. Here, then, are two such dresses."

So the Princess must be taking a look at the two dresses again.

First she was for having the gold one; then it was the silver one she thought the most beautiful. But any one with half an eye could see that the choice lay not with the two dresses, but with the two lads who bore them, and that neither of these was pleasing to the Princess.

Yes, that is what any one with half an eye could see. But if any one used *two* eyes, and these were very sharp, it might easily be seen that not so much was the Princess thinking of the Provost's two sons as of the lad yonder, in the fine green suit of silk and velvet.

"And is there not some other suitor, who, perchance, has arrived late?" That is what the Princess had to ask now.

"No, there are no others," answered the King, and he told the Princess she was to take her pick of these two and be done with it.

Well, the Princess did n't say "No" to that, only first she would like to speak a word or two with the lad in green yonder.

The King could see no sense in that, but he made no objection if she would be quick about it.

So presently Peter was brought before the Princess, who

blushed very prettily and cast down her eyes as she let her fingers fall to playing with the folds of her dress.

Did the lad have a gift for her? The Princess no more than whispered this question without once lifting her eyes.

How the Provost's two sons did laugh when they saw that the lad in green was only their servant, Peter. And so that simpleton was setting himself up to win the Princess, was he? Well, that would be a good joke to tell of when they were over in Noodleburg again.

Peter was sorry he had no gift for the Princess. Of course there were those two caskets, which were really his; but whoever would believe it if he told how they had been taken from him?

The Princess was sorry also when Peter told her he had no gift to offer. "That is too bad," she said; "now I suppose there is no help for it only to choose one of these caskets."

The Princess then handled the silver dress, but all the time, out of the corner of her eye, she was looking at Peter. Then it was the gold dress she handled; but never for a moment could she forget the lad in green.

At last, with tears in her eyes, she turned to the great gathering of her subjects and said: "My beloved people, your Princess has pledged her word to take for her husband the one in all the land who brings to her a dress into the making of which has gone no sorrow. Two such dresses are now before me. Your Princess will keep her word. Your Princess has made her choice, and will have for her husband, to sit beside her on the throne and rule one half of the kingdom, that one of these two whose dress is the color of spun —"

The King Showeth His Displeasure.

"Hold, my Princess!"

It was Peter who cried this.

"Wait! Decide not until you see my gift, for I too have a gift for thee, even though it be but a small one."

As Peter spoke, he held out his hand; and in his palm there was only a little gray web which a spider had just left there.

That was a poor enough gift indeed to offer a Princess, and how the Provost's two sons did laugh!

The King stamped his foot and raved, as mad as could be. What did the lad in green mean by playing such a scurvy trick upon the Princess? The King would like an answer to that question. Where were the guards? Let them come at once and pack the lad off to prison. The King would n't have any more delay or any more fooling; there had been too much of that already; the Princess was just to make her choice of either the gold or the silver dress, and be done with it.

While the King was raving and stamping about, the Princess did n't hear one single word that he said. She held out her hand to receive Peter's gift; and, when she looked up into his face, the bright light that came dancing into her eyes drove away the tears very quickly, I can tell you.

Peter dropped the web into her little hand, and no sooner did it feel that gentle touch than it all unfolded; no longer a spider's web, but changed to a beautiful filmy dress, like unto a rainbow mist from Dreamland.

It did n't take long now for the Princess to get the whole story out of the lad in green. Then it was good to see the way the King's lackeys made birch switches dance a jig upon

the backs of the Provost's two sons as they chased them through the town and out on the road to Noodleburg.

Which one of them she would have chosen I do not know; but now it was the lad in green she would have, and it was easily seen he was the sort of a lad she had been waiting for.

"Well, you may have him if you wish," said the King, "but as for me, I will never give one half of the kingdom to a poor wood-chopper's son with only one decent suit to his back, so there is no need to say any more words on that matter."

That speech of the King made no difference to the Princess and Peter, however. They were sure they would be very happy, even if they could n't have one half of the kingdom. The Princess then said "Good-by" to Peter and started for the palace to prepare for the wedding, which she said would be held that very afternoon. As for Peter, the people bore him away on their shoulders to the finest inn in town, and all the while they were singing and cheering in greatest glee.

When Peter reached his room at the inn, he must needs stand and wait in the hall, there was such a colony of ants swarming through the door as covered nearly one half the floor. Every ant bore in its mouth a grain of sand, and these they deposited in a little heap upon the floor. When the last ant had brought in its burden and departed, the mound began to glow and glimmer, to burn and crackle, to flash and sparkle, until presently there lay upon the floor, not a heap of sand, but more than a bushel of rich and rare jewels. Not a jewel in all that pile was smaller than a hazel-nut, some of them were much larger; and, besides diamonds, rubies,

and sapphires, there was at least one of every other rare stone that one might mention.

When the King learned of all these riches that had come to Peter he began to whistle a new tune. As for giving him half the kingdom, he was glad enough to do that now, I can tell you. It was n't every day he could be sure of finding a clever lad like Peter.

After the wedding, which was the finest ever held in that country, matters went very smoothly with poor Hans's son, and he and the Princess lived together long and happily. When it came time for them to rule over the whole kingdom, they ruled wisely and justly and were greatly loved by all their subjects.

The Two Chests

DOWN by the river bank, just outside of the town of Noodleburg, was the great windmill of Rich Peter. How it came about that he was called Rich Peter is more than I can tell, though in truth the matter seems not over-strange, since 't is certain he had great store of riches. Some folk say (and indeed it has been so whispered to me) that Rich Peter got his riches by taking somewhat more of corn from each farmer's bags than was his due for the milling. Yet of this I cannot say for certain, but only know that he was a sour, crusty old fellow, with never a good word for a body, and nought save envy for any bit of luck that came tumbling to his neighbors.

Now, joining the land of the miller, on a rough bit of stony ground, was the house and farm of Hans, the brother of Rich Peter; and because but little would grow upon this farm, Hans got the name of Poor Hans.

But if Hans and his good wife were poor, yet they always had enough to eat and a bit left over, and of clothes enough to keep them warm and one suit apiece for Sunday. So you see there was cause for joy in their house, and they never let sorrow get a warm nest in the corner. Indeed, Hans always went about his work with such a twinkle in his eye and such a laughing countenance that most folk got to calling him not Poor

Hans, but Happy Hans, which was a name, I think, quite worth the having.

Well, one day when Hans had been to market with some

Did He Speak to Hans?

parsnips and turnips and was returning whistling a merry tune as he sat astride his little donkey, between the two empty panniers, it happened that Rich Peter was riding that way also.

Down the road he came, dressed in his finest Sunday clothes and astride his big bay horse. Did he speak to Hans? Oh, no, Rich Peter would not speak to Hans. He just rode by with his nose high in the air and never a nod for anybody, and pretty soon was lost to sight in a bend in the roadway.

Now just beyond this bend was another traveler — a little old lady with a basket of eggs tucked under her arm.

"How do you do, Master Miller?" said the little old lady.

But never a word did she get in reply. No, the miller just rode on with his nose high in the air, and the only answer that went to the little old lady was a cloud of dust that was kicked up about the horse's feet.

"*Ker-choo!*" said the little old lady, "*Ker-choo! Ker-choo!*" for the dust had made her sneeze and had gotten into her eyes. So she wiped her eyes, and, by then, along came Hans.

"Oh, ho!" said Hans. Then, quick as a wink, he was in the roadway, and had picked up the dame, and had her seated between the panniers, without so much as breaking a single egg.

Doffing his cap, Hans bowed in a courtly manner, and the dame bade him good day and laughed full merrily. After that, Hans took the donkey by the bridle and led it along the highway, and he and the little old lady fell to talking together

of this and that and the other — as of the weather, and how the crops looked, and such like matters,— and in a little while they came to the gate before Hans's house. So Hans helped her to alight from the donkey, and she thanked him for his kindness and said:

"Maybe, now, thou art called Happy Hans?"

Hans laughed merrily at this and said, "Aye, good dame, so my neighbors name me."

"Thou hast but a sorry farm to make thee happy and get thee such a name," said the little old lady. "Yet, perchance, an thou wouldst plow yonder hilltop, thy crop would be somewhat bettered." Then she took up her basket and went on her way.

At her words, Hans laughed so loud and heartily that the good dame, his wife, must needs come out to see what it was all about.

"See!" said Hans, in answer to the good wife. "Yonder dame bids me plow our stony hilltop and so get bigger crops. Didst ever hear a bigger joke?" and scarcely could he get these words out amidst his laughter.

Well, the good wife thought it a jolly joke also, and that the crop was like to be no more than big stones. Then Hans unharnessed the donkey, and after that went in and sat down to a good dish of cabbage broth, and no more was said of the plowing that day. The next day Hans must needs go to the hilltop and look about a little, and so again on the day after; and in the end it came about that one morning, when the good wife looked that way, there was Hans with the donkey hooked to the plow turning the first furrow.

"Well," said she, "I will go out and give him a little help."

Up the hill, then, she trudged and came to Hans just as the plow's nose caught in a great flat stone. So they both took hold of the stone and heaved it over, and there, nigh where the stone was, what should they see glittering in the sun but a fine golden casket and, beside it, one of pewter!

" My, but here are treasures worth the finding! " said Hans.

"'My, but here are treasures worth the finding!' said Hans."

" Yes," said the good wife, " here is a crop that is better than stones! "

" Aye, or turnips either, for that matter," said Hans.

Well, after they had looked on the caskets some little time in wonder, they took up the gold one; and when they saw how nicely it was wrought, the good wife spoke and said:

"See, Hans, if we take this one, folk will ask how we came by it, and they will say: 'Happy Hans is turned thief; better he had remained Poor Hans.' Then, when it comes to the ear of the provost, mayhap thou wilt be hailed before the king and cast into prison. What say you, Husband, shall we not put it again beneath the rock and take only the pewter one, which will look so fine on the mantel above the fire?"

Yes, the good wife said all this to Hans; and as for Hans — well, he had eyes that could see more than the shell to that nut and that a good bit of truth lay in the kernel.

So in the end it was done as the good wife wished, and they took away with them only the casket of pewter and left the one of gold beneath the rock on the hilltop.

"See, Husband," said the good wife, when they had placed the casket upon the mantel, "does it not look fine?"

"That it does!" said Hans. "What think you it can contain?"

Well, the good wife could n't answer that, but they might look and see. So they had it down off the mantel and found no trouble in opening the lid. Inside was only a bit of parchment on which was written:

Ask, and it shall be thine till thou hast enough.

"Now, Wife, what think you can be the meaning of this?" said Hans.

But though they puzzled long on the matter, neither one could find an answer.

"Humph!" said Hans, at last. "Wife, I am getting hungry. I wish we might have dinner."

Crash! Bang! Boom! There was a flash of red light

in the box, and out hopped two funny little men, who straightway went about laying the table with all sorts of good things to eat. So quickly did they do this, that Hans and his good wife had scarcely recovered their senses when they saw more food before them than Neighbor Hinckle-fitz had on the day of the mayor's visit, and that was a good lot, I can tell you!

"Hold!" said the good wife, who was a careful, thrifty body and did not like waste. "Surely there is enough here for this day and to-morrow!"

At the word "Enough" the little men vanished back into the casket and closed the lid.

Well, that was a fine meal for Hans to sit down to, you may be sure, and such cooking as even the good wife said she had never tasted before! When they had eaten their fill and had put away, on a shelf in the cupboard, what remained, Hans lent a hand in clearing away the dishes.

"Wife," said he, "that was a fine dinner we have just eaten. I wish the donkey out in the barn might have as good."

Crash! Boom! Bang!

Up flew the lid of the casket, then there was the red light, and quick as a wink the two little men were out in the barn feeding oats to the donkey.

Hans and the good wife were not frightened this time, for they had seen the casket act that way before, only they did not know it was in answer to Hans's wish.

In a little while the dishes were all wiped and put away.

Then Hans and the good wife got them ready to go to town, and started for the barn to harness the donkey.

My, what a sight there was to meet their gaze! There was the barn bursting full and running over with oats, and the two little men shoveling in more as fast as ever a body could shovel!

"Hold!" said Hans, for he feared the donkey would be smothered. "There are enough oats here for a year and a day!"

At that word "Enough," the two little men vanished, and the click of the lid told that they were again back in the casket.

As you will guess, when Hans and the good wife put their heads together, they found it not hard to discover the secret of the casket. Then matters went pretty smoothly in that house, you may be sure. There was always enough and to spare on the pantry shelf, and a bolt or two of good linen in the closet.

Said the neighbors: "Happy Hans has a thrifty wife; see how they prosper, and on such a poor bit of land, too." But of course the neighbors knew nothing of the little pewter casket on the mantel above the fire.

Meanwhile, how were matters going with Rich Peter? Well, it did n't take half a look for Rich Peter to see that mat-

ters were better than well with Happy Hans. "Humph!" said he, as he rubbed his nose, "we shall see!" So one day, *rap, tap, tap,*— there was Rich Peter at the door of Happy Hans.

"Good day to you, Brother," said Rich Peter.

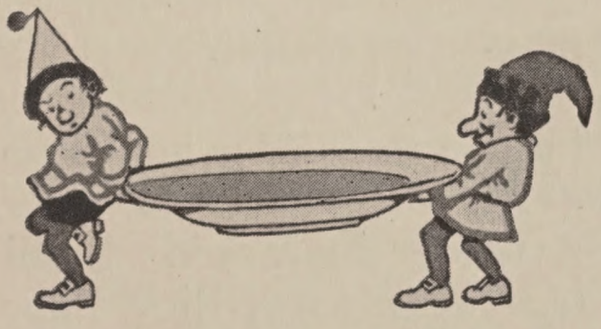
"Good day to you, Brother," said Happy Hans.

Then a plate was laid at the table for Rich Peter, and he tucked beneath his napkin as fine a meal as ever might be had at the mayor's house.

"Ahem!" began Rich Peter, when the meal was finished. But that was only the beginning, and the end was just this: that from Hans and his good wife he got the whole story of the pewter casket.

Then Rich Peter rode off to town, and *rap, tap, tap* — this time it was at the door of the provost's house.

When Rich Peter and the provost got their heads together, only this could come of it, that Happy Hans must give up the pewter casket. Yes, that was what the provost said when he came to Hans's house the next day. Of course when the provost said this, Hans knew there were no two ways out of it.



So the casket was taken to the house of the rich miller, and there it was to be share and share alike with Rich Peter and the provost.

"What shall we wish for first?" said the provost.

"Oh, thus and so," said Rich Peter.

"No, that would n't do," said the provost; "it must be so and so."

In this way they got to quarreling, the miller wanting one thing and the provost another, and in the end there was no wish made that day, or the next, or the day after.

While matters were going this way at the home of Rich Peter, the larder was ever getting lower at the home of Happy Hans.

"Wife," said Hans one day, "let us go take a look at the gold casket. For see, the provost has taken away the pewter one, and he can do no more with the other."

After that it was n't long before the gold casket was on the mantel where had been the one of pewter, and no great time passed before Hans and the good wife had the lid open and found another parchment, on which was written:

Ask, and thou shalt have till thou art content.

About this time Rich Peter had begun to wonder how matters were going with Happy Hans. And the thought: "Now he is like to be feeling pretty poor without the casket. I will go and see." And so *rap, tap, tap* — there was Rich Peter at the door of Happy Hans's house, just as Hans and his good wife were reading the scroll.

Quick as a wink Hans had the parchment in his pocket and the casket back on the mantel. Then it was "Good day to you, Brother Hans," and "Good day to you, Brother Peter";

and there was Rich Peter in the room with his eyes on the casket.

Now this time, Rich Peter was n't going to bother with the provost — no! It might be share and share alike with a *pewter* casket, but a *gold* casket he was going to get all for himself. How much did Hans want for it? That was the question he asked now. "Well, of course Hans did n't want to sell, but then might not the provost take this one away, also? Yes, that was what the provost was like to do. So, in the end, Rich Peter went off with the casket, and Hans had a hundred good gold dollars jingling in his pocket, and, as my neighbor across the way says, many a man has had less.

Now, when Rich Peter came to the mill, there was the provost waiting in the doorway.

"See, Peter," said the provost, "since we cannot decide which of our wishes will be best, let us wish that each get what he most should have."

Yes, Peter saw no reason why they should n't make that wish. But by this time the provost had spied the gold casket.

"Humph! what have you there?" said the provost.

"Oh, this is just another casket I have bought from Hans," said the miller.

Well, that was all right, but since they had now decided upon a wish, why not ask it of the gold casket — that was what the provost suggested.

"There can be no harm in giving him one wish," thought Peter. So they put the casket before them and made ready to wish.

"Give us that which each most should have!" said they both at once.

Crash! Boom! Bang! And now the light from the gold casket was green, and out came two little men, and in the hand of each was a big club! Then how they did pommel the miller and the provost until there was such screeching, yelling, and dancing as never was heard before in Noodleburg.

"Enough, enough!" cried the provost.

"Enough, enough!" cried Rich Peter.

No good came of all their crying though, for now they should have said "Content" as 't was written on the parchment.

Well, at all this racket, out came the miller's wife, and now nothing would do but she must hurry off and get Hans, else Rich Peter and the provost were like to get such a drubbing as would make their bones ache for many a month and a day over.

"Oh, yes," said Hans, when he reached the mill, "I will stop the little men. But we must make a bit of a bargain first."

That was all right, said the miller and the provost, only he was to be quick about it. Well, just so and so, that was all Hans wanted.

Now the miller and the provost made pretty wry faces over this bargain, only you could n't tell this from the wry faces they made over their drubbing; and since there were no two words to be said on the subject, it was just "Yes." And then Hans said "Content," and back into the casket went the two little men.

After that the miller and the provost were taken into the

house and put to bed, and 't was many a long day ere they went about without a limp. As for Hans, he just put the two caskets into a basket, and, with a hundred gold dollars from the provost a-jingling in his pocket, started off home.

For *that* was the bargain he had made.

Hans had n't gone far along the road when he saw right before him that same little old woman with her basket of eggs.

" Good day to you, Dame! " said Hans.

" Good day to you, Happy Hans," said the dame. Then Hans took her basket, and with that under one arm and the basket of caskets under the other, they went along merrily together until they came to the gate before the house of Hans.

" Thank you! " said the old lady.

" Good day to you," said Hans. Then he gave her the basket and went to look for the good wife. When he had found her, then of course they must peep into the basket at the caskets.

Oh me, oh my, what a sight that was that met their gaze! No caskets were in the basket, no, not a sign of any! — only just a few dozen nice fresh eggs. Yes, just as sure as my old black cat has six white kittens, Hans had given the old dame the wrong basket!

What she ever did with those caskets is more than I can tell, but I just wish I could get a peep at them some day — I know what *I* would wish.

" What of Hans? " you ask. Well, a body who has two hundred round gold dollars on the shelf can well be called Happy Hans. Don't you think so?

Hans *and the* Hoop *of* Gold

ONCE upon a time, many, many years ago, when Noodleburg was not the great and flourishing city that it is to-day, there lived in the Blue Castle a Young King who was so good and rich and powerful that of all the princesses in the world there was not a one that would not have been glad to become his bride.

Upon a day when the Young King was gazing into his magic crystal globe, he saw mirrored on its polished surface such a marvelously beautiful Damsel as never had he dreamed of in all the days of his life.

"She it is whom I will choose for my bride," said he, and out into the world he rode to find her.

Now it happened that in the Blue Mountains just beyond Noodleburg there lived a Witch who was such a mistress of the Black Arts as might not be found in many a day's journey.

Of course this Witch knew all that was happening in the whole world. But most especially she kept an eye and an ear open to those comings and goings which most concerned the Young King of Blue Castle.

So it was not strange that on the day when the Young King gazed into his magic crystal the Witch saw all that he saw; and moreover she knew, also, that this was the work of a Good

Fairy who wanted the Young King to marry the sweetest and dearest maiden in all the realm beyond the Blue Mountains.

Yes, the Witch knew all this and more too, and it did n't take her long to brew a pot of trouble. From delving and searching in her great books she had learned this, that, and the other in the Black Arts of weaving magic spells, so that, when the Young King had traveled a bit of his journey and had come to the first of the Blue Mountains, he was met by a Damsel for all the world like that one he had seen in his magic crystal.

The Witch.

Now the Young King felt a great joy, and he thought, "Here at last I have found my bride!" But just then a Butterfly brushed against his eyes, and, as the touch of its wings made him wink and blink, he saw that really it was not the Damsel at all who stood before him, but only the wicked Witch.

"Be gone!" said the Young King, and he would have driven her away with his sword; but quick as a wink the Witch again took her own shape, and working a magic spell, she changed the Young King into a great Frog.

If the Good Fairy had not changed herself into a Butterfly in order to give magic sight to the Young King, she might have found some way to prevent such an awful happening. Now,

however, she was fluttering in the sunlight high over head and could do nothing.

So the Young King was doomed to remain a Frog until such a time as he would be given to drink the Water of Life from the Green Grotto in the depths of the Blue Mountains. That doom was like to last for many a year, for who would ever find and take to him the wonderful Water of Life?

Listen and I will tell you:

Hans was a poor wood-chopper.

He lived on the edge of the hills over beyond Noodleburg.

Each morning Hans would shoulder his ax and go into the great forest, and at night he would shoulder his bundle of fagots and trudge cheerfully home again.

Day in and day out that was the life of Hans, and always, as he stepped along one foot before the other, there would come rippling over his lips such a merry whistling tune as was a joy to hear. Even the little birds hopped from tree to tree and flew gaily overhead, so glad they were to keep him company.

In the midst of the forest the pines grew big and tall and so wondrous straight that nothing would do but the Burgomaster must have them for masts for his ships. So on a day there was great hewing and chopping and the chips flew thick and fast until, when night came, only one gnarled and twisted old hollow tree was left standing.

"See," said the boss chopper to Hans, "yonder blighted tree mars the glade; cut it down and thou mayest have the wood."

"Thank you, sir," said Hans, and he thought: "Here

will be fagots a-plenty, and good tough logs into the bargain. To-morrow I will come early and mayhap earn a silver penny or two ere sundown."

On the morrow Hans was astir before sun-up, and thus it happened he came into the woodland while the elves and fays and other wood-folk were yet abroad. Thus also it happened that when he would have let his ax bite deep into the tree-trunk, there hopped out of the hollow a queer Little Man dressed all in green except that on his head was a cap of red with a long feather.

The Little Man.

"Good morning," said the Little Man, doffing his red cap.

Well, the end of that matter was just this: Here was an old hollow tree in which the Little Man had lived for many a day, and now would Hans spare it until the Little Man could look about and find a new abode?

Why, yes, Hans would surely do that! But see — how would the Little Man like to go home and live with Hans? He might have a snug corner in which to sleep, with each night a bowl of broth and each morning a plate of porridge, and on Sundays and holidays a slice or two of good white bread and cheese.

My, how the Little Man skipped and danced in glee when he heard that offer! *He* knew Luck when it came stepping his way.

Hans, too, picked up a piece of Luck that morning. This is how it happened:

Some woodland folk are full of tricks and always playing pranks. Once such a one comes to live in your house, the milk will sour before the cream rises, the hens will stop laying, the sheep will stray, and Trouble will ever toast his toes on your hearth.

The Little Man in Green was not that kind.

He brought Good Luck to Hans.

All the milk turned to good rich cream. The hens never stopped laying, and often the eggs had two yolks. More than that. Each night when Hans was asleep the Little Man would whisper in his ear strange and wonderful dreams!

One night the Little Man told Hans of a beautiful Blue Castle over beyond the mountains, and of three Giants and a marvelous Hoop of Gold, and of the treasure that would go to any one who possessed that Hoop of Gold.

Next morning nothing would do but Hans must make that journey over the mountains. So he put on the fine uniform Herr Mayor had given him when he was in the army. Then, shouldering his gun, he stepped out, one foot before the other, whistling merrily as was always his custom.

All day he traveled and all night, and by sun-rise he came to the mountains.

There was the Giant sitting on a big stone at the base of the first foot-hills.

When the Giant saw a soldier approaching, he drew his sword and bellowed such a big laugh that the trees bent and shook as in a wild storm.

Hans was not at all afraid and marched right on until he was so close the Giant had to stoop to see him.

"Good morning, Mr. Giant," said Hans.

"Good morning, Little Soldier," said the Giant.

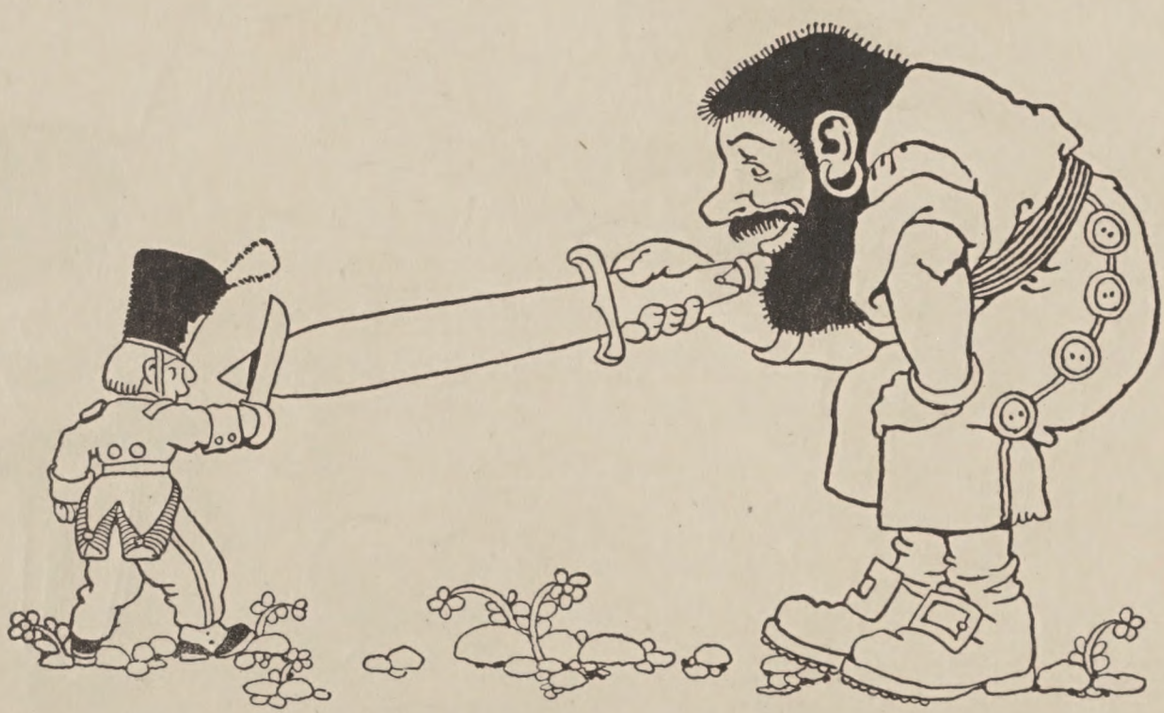
Was this the road to the Blue Castle? Hans would like to know. Yes, this was the road, and what did Hans want at the Blue Castle? Oh, only the Hoop of Gold — that was all Hans wanted. Well, it took a brave person to get the Hoop

The Giant.

of Gold. Could Hans fight with his sword? Yes, Hans could fight; they taught him that in the army. Would the Giant like to try a bout with him? *H-m, h-m* — the Giant did n't care much about fighting, for he thought: "If this Little Soldier is as strong as he is brave, I may get a good

whipping." And all the while he felt Hans' sword pressing against the point of his.

Well, the end of that talk was just this: If Hans would travel all day and all night, he would come to the valley, at the base of the second foot-hills, where lived the Giant's Brother. Hans was to whisper so-and-so, and so-and-so, and the Giant's Brother might tell him a thing or two worth the knowing.



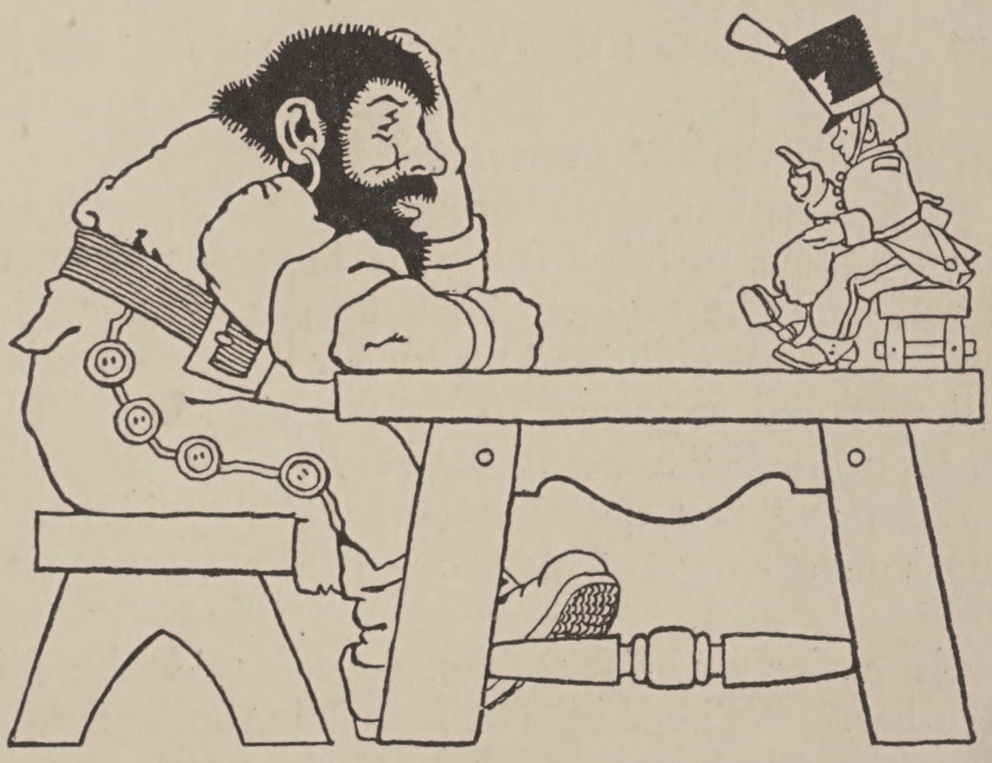
"He felt Hans' sword pressing against the point of his."

Hans now bade the Giant good-by; and when he had traveled a day and a night, he came to a great cave, and there was the Giant's Brother at breakfast, and as like he was to the first Giant as two peas in a pod.

"So-and-so, and so-and-so," whispered Hans, so low that

even I do not know the words of that message. But it must have been very important, for the Giant's Brother, who had sharp ears and could hear half-way around the world, jumped quickly to his feet and, picking Hans up, set him in a little chair on the table.

The Hoop of Gold — that was what Hans was looking for, was it? Very good. But the Hoop of Gold was a treasure



"The Giant's brother set him in a little chair on the table."

beyond price; how did Hans propose to get it? Did n't Hans know that the Hoop of Gold was guarded by the Giant's Other Brother who lived in the Blue Mountains up yonder?

"Why so-and-so, and so-and-so," whispered Hans; and at that the Giant shook his head wisely and said, "Why, yes; that is so."

Then he gave Hans a good meal, and when the last crumb had been tucked away, he said, " Remember, so-and-so, and so-and-so."

" I won't forget," said Hans, and marched off.

Another day and a night Hans traveled to the very base of the Blue Mountains, and there sat the Giant's Second Brother, and as like he was to the other two as three peas in a pod.

Yes, the Giant's Second Brother was Keeper of the Hoop of Gold. Hans might take a look at it, but as for carrying it away, they would talk that over later.

When the Hoop of Gold was brought, Hans thought he had never seen anything so beautiful. He looked at it this way and that way and the other. Then he put his head in the Hoop and looked through, and no sooner did he do this than he saw all that had happened to the Young King. Yes, he saw it all, from the beginning to the very end.

" I must go and find the Water of Life," said he, " and release the Young King. This Hoop of Gold can wait until I return."

" That is easier promised than done," said the Giant's Second Brother. " The Water of Life is in the Green Grotto guarded by the Black Lion. Before you reach the Green Grotto, you must pass the old Witch, and lucky it will be for you if she turn you not into an owl or a bat or some other fly-by-night."

" Oh, so-and-so, and so-and-so," whispered Hans.

" Why, that is so ! " said the Giant's Second Brother. And the upshot of the matter was that he went out behind the house and caught a nice fat Pig on which he threw a saddle

and bridle; and when all was ready, Hans mounted and set off at a smart trot.

By and by the path led to a great black wood, and there at the entrance stood the Witch. How she did laugh when she saw Hans astride the Pig, for she thought: "Here will be a fine meal for my Black Lion in the Green Grotto yonder!" So she let them pass into the Black Forest.

Better it had been for the Witch, I can tell you, if she had

"There sat the lion guarding the entrance."

not let those two ride past, for the nice fat Pig was no less a one than — but wait a minute and we shall see!

When the two came near the Grotto, there sat the Lion guarding the entrance; and no sooner did he see them than up he jumped. Then off jumped Hans, and away scampered the nice fat Pig, and after the Pig went the Lion.

When the Pig came again to the entrance of the forest and could see the Witch, it ran behind a tree; and in a moment it

was no longer a Pig, but the Good Fairy, who quickly wove a magic spell. And now it was the wicked Witch who was changed to a Pig.

Away ran the Witch, and after her the Lion. If the Lion

"Hans straightway carried the crystal goblet to the Frog King."

ever caught the Witch I was not near to see, but at least I know she had a good scare.

As for Hans, he was in the Green Grotto filling a crystal goblet with the Water of Life, which straightway he carried to the Frog King, who, when he had taken a drink, became again a beautiful Young King.

After this they all went back to the Giant's Second Brother, who now gave Hans the Hoop of Gold.

"Thank you!" said Hans. "This Hoop of Gold is very fine; too fine, I think, for a poor wood-chopper, whose neighbors would all say: 'Hans has the Hoop of Gold; he is too proud now to speak to us.' Then they would all shun me, and at night I should have to watch it to keep away robbers. But anyhow, it is a fine Hoop. See, shall we not roll it down this hill-side?"

All the while Hans said this, the Good Fairy smiled happily, and when Hans started the hoop rolling, she stood on her tiptoes and clapped her hands in glee.

Down the hill it traveled, bounding from rock to rock until it reached the bottom, when *crash! bang!* it burst into a thousand pieces, and each piece was one of the Young King's Knights, all in glistening armor. Yes, those pieces were the Knights who had gone to the Blue Mountains to rescue the Young King and had been wrought into the Hoop by the wicked Witch!

The Young King would have taken Hans back with him to his Blue Castle, where he would have made him a Duke or a Baron or something of that sort. But Hans did n't care for riches, so he thanked the Young King and said he thought he would just be jogging along home. Then they shook hands and parted, and the Young King certainly looked very fine as he rode off with all his Knights. Never did the sun shine on a braver array of silvery armor and bright pennons.

As for Hans, when he again reached home, he married Neighbor Pfitz's daughter, and everything went well with him from that time on. The Little Man in Green had disap-

peared, and Hans never saw him again. I suspect the Good Fairy had something to do with Hans' finding him that time in the hollow tree — but of that I do not know for sure and certain.

What of the Young King? And did he ever find the beautiful Damsel?

Why, yes. But that is another story.

The Master *Makes a Bargain*

ONE fine day the Master of Black Arts came stepping into Noodleburg. He was looking for a servant. Yes, the master had his eye here, there, and around the corner, as the saying goes, for a likely-looking lad to go traveling with him.

Master Jacob was sitting on the front stoop of his mother's house, whistling a merry tune and thinking 't was fine weather for fishing.

"Good day to you, Jacob," said the master.

"Good day, sir," said Jacob.

And how would Jacob like to go traveling?

Oh, that would n't be so bad, thought Jacob, but where was the gentleman going?

"Oh, just over the hills into the next town yonder."

And see, if Jacob cared to go, there were fine sights and good wages to be had into the bargain.

"And what might the wages be?" That was what Jacob would like to know, for he was a good stout lad, and had to be earning a penny or two as the days jogged along.

They were good wages the master had to offer, and that was sure and certain. Listen: for three days the master would serve Jacob, and he might have all he could wish for; after

"Master Jacob was sitting on the front stoop of his mother's house, whistling a merry tune and thinking 't was fine weather for fishing."

that — well, after that Jacob was just to serve the master, and go errands, and help at this, that, and the other; and all the time he was to wear good clothes, have enough to eat, and a warm seat in the corner by the fire.

Well, those were pretty fine wages, and no mistake about that! Yes, Jacob would be glad to strike such a bargain. So they shook hands on the matter, and set forth on their travels.

When it was evening, they came into the great town over the hills and went to the inn, where the master ordered a good dinner and the best of everything.

"Now I am traveling with Luck as a way-fellow," thought Jacob, when he had cleaned the last crumb from off his plate and had pushed his chair back from the table. But that is the way a lad always feels after he has tucked away a good meal. As for the master, he just chuckled; for you see, he knew how to spread thick honey on a crust, and not in the way luck does it, either.

Next morning Jacob was for taking a walk about the town. Had he any wish for the master to grant? No, not yet. He was just for seeing what kind of a house it was where Herr Mayor lived. Oh, as for Herr Mayor's house, why, that was only over the way yonder. Jacob would have no trouble finding it. And while he was gone, the master would wait right there in the inn. If Jacob should want anything, why, here was a little horn, and all that need be done was just to blow three blasts.

Now when Jacob came to Herr Mayor's house there was Gretchen, Herr Mayor's daughter, picking roses in the front garden — as good a sight as was to be seen in all that town.

Toot! toot! toot! Jacob blew upon the horn; and sure enough, there was the master coming around the corner!

"See, Master," said Jacob, "I would like to marry Herr Mayor's daughter."

"Well, Herr Mayor would never consent to Gretchen marrying a poor lad like you, Jacob, so that is not to be thought of." That 's what the master said. Then he took the little tin horn and blew three blasts, and, at the third blast, they were in a beautiful house with servants to wait upon them and everything as fine as might be.

Now Jacob was for starting off at once to see Herr Mayor, so he put on a fine suit of silk and velvet, and a hat with a great plume. Then he buckled on a beautiful sword, and, mounting a fine mottled horse which the servants brought, was soon clattering down the street.

Herr Mayor was seated in the garden, puffing away at his long-stemmed pipe.

"Good day, sir," said Jacob.

"Good day," said Herr Mayor.

Would Herr Mayor give his daughter to Jacob for his wife? That was what Jacob had come to see about.

"*Prut!* Out upon him!" Herr Mayor would not hear any such talk as that.

But listen: Jacob had a fine house around the corner, with servants and horses, and a bag of gold dollars upon the shelf.

Well, if that was so, Herr Mayor might think about it. And now, how would Jacob like to stay and have dinner?

Jacob did n't say no to *that,* you may be sure!

Just then, in comes Gretchen with a great basket of roses.

The Master.

Only one look did she take at Jacob; then she cast down her eyes, and all of the color in the roses jumped right up into her cheeks, so it was very easy to see how the wind was blowing in *that* quarter. No strange matter was that, either, for a finer lad than Jacob was not to be met with every day.

After dinner was over (and a fine dinner it was, too) Herr Mayor was ready to talk over that matter of the marrying. It was all right and good for the lad to have a fine house, and horses, and servants, and a bag of gold dollars on the shelf, he said; all that would come handy when they set up housekeeping. But — there were other lads with fine houses in the town, and any one would be glad of a lass like Gretchen. So Herr Mayor had said once and again that the lass was only to marry such a lad as would fetch him the Pewter Tankard from the Red House in the Black Valley over the hill yonder.

When Herr Mayor said this, he thought he would be rid of Jacob, and no mistake, for it was no common tankard they had over there in the Red House. No, that was a tankard worth the having, I can tell you! It was full to the brim of good brown ale, and no matter how much a body might spill or drink, why, the tankard would never be empty, but always have a good draught to quench one's thirst on a hot day.

But Herr Mayor knew nothing of that bargain Jacob had made with the Master of Black Arts.

Off Jacob started then, and no sooner was he on the other side of his own door, than *toot! toot! toot!* — there were the blasts tumbling out of the little tin horn.

"What can I do to serve you now, Jacob?" said the master.

"Just then, in comes Gretchen with a fine basket of roses."

Oh, Herr Mayor said so and so, and so and so; and Jacob could n't have Gretchen until he fetched the Pewter Tankard from the Red House in the Black Valley over the hill yonder.

"*Humph!*" and the master began to rub his nose. That was a task Herr Mayor had set them, and no two words about that. But it might be done. Jacob was just to sit in the corner and wait.

Then the master went to where there stood a copper brazier in which were a few live coals, and he drew forth from his pocket a little silver vial and shook from it three white crystals. These he let fall into the brazier. Into this mist the master leaped, and immediately he was changed into a great eagle which went flying through the open window, over the tree-tops, and away off towards the hills.

Over the hills the eagle soared, and there before it was the great Black Valley, and in the midst of the valley was the Red House.

Now the Red House was so named because within it there was always burning a mighty fire; so that not only through the windows, but also through the walls, there was always to be seen the red, glowing heat.

When the eagle drew near to the Red House, the air became so hot that it might go no further. So it alighted upon the ground, and, looking about among the moss and leaves, found a tiny red berry. This it ate; when lo, it changed into a little gray mole!

Into the ground the mole burrowed, and went on and on, until by and by it was right beneath the house. Then it poked its nose up through the ground, and there it was, right in the fire, and smoke began to arise from the burning hair upon its

back. Then, quick as a wink, the master transformed himself from the mole into the smoke and went sailing up through the red flames within the house until he was in the topmost room of the topmost tower, and there, in the very heart of the blaze, stood the Pewter Tankard! Then the smoke put out its arms, and grasped the tankard, and bore it up, up, up, until it was far above the house. Then it drifted away and was soon resting on a hilltop on the very rim of the valley.

After that, it was only the work of a moment for the master to change again to an eagle. Then, with the tankard grasped in its great claws, over the hills it soared, and presently was back in the house with Jacob.

By this time it was evening, and when the master had again assumed his own shape and Jacob had the tankard, there was nothing to do but to wait until to-morrow before going to see Herr Mayor.

So passed one of the three days in which the master was to serve Jacob, and but two remained.

On the morrow Jacob sent two of his servants to Herr Mayor's house with the Pewter Tankard, and might Jacob come and marry Gretchen? That was what the servants were to ask Herr Mayor.

Well, Herr Mayor was good and glad to get the Pewter Tankard, and that was the truth. But Jacob could not have Gretchen yet. No, Herr Mayor would n't, would n't give up Gretchen for a Pewter Tankard. If Jacob was bent on having the lass, he was just to fetch Herr Mayor the White Pipe from the Yellow House that was in the Green Valley over the hills yonder.

This time Herr Mayor was sure it would be the end of

Jacob. For the White Pipe was a famous one, and no matter how much one puffed at the long stem, why, there was always a good smoke left in the bowl, and the troll who lived in the Yellow House was n't one to part with such a treasure easily.

And now would the master get Jacob the White Pipe? That was what Jacob had to ask when the servants brought back Herr Mayor's message.

Well, that was another hard task, but it might be done. Jacob was just to sit in the corner and wait again.

Off went the master, and pretty soon he came to the bank of a stream. Then he poked around until he had found a good handful of clean white sand. This he threw into the air right above the stream; and when it came down, there he was, changed into a beautiful silver fish, which no sooner touched the water than away it darted like a swift flash of sunlight.

Down the stream the fish swam, and by and by came into a broad lake in the heart of the Green Valley. In the midst of the lake was an island, and on the island was a queer Yellow House.

Now when the master in the form of the silver fish came to the lake, there was the troll sitting on a rock before the house, fishing. Then the master caught at the line and gave it a twitch; and immediately the troll began to tug and pull, until presently there was the silver fish flopping upon the bare rock.

After that, it was n't long until the troll had the fish up to the house and on the table in the kitchen. Then he went out

to get some faggots, for he was n't going to waste any time before he had a fine fish like that frying on the fire for his dinner.

As soon as the troll was out of the door, the master opened his eyes and looked about — and there was the White Pipe hanging over the mantel. Quick as a wink, he changed into a long-legged stork, and then he could barely reach the pipe with the tip of his bill.

Just then the troll came in with the faggots and that was like to have been the end of the master. For no sooner did the troll see the stork with the pipe in its bill, than down tumbled all of the faggots but one, and with this in his hand and a wild yell upon his lips he went after the bird as fast as his legs could carry him.

But the master was too quick for the troll, and now he changed into a black cat, bounding between the troll's legs and out through the doorway before there was any chance of having his bones rapped with the faggot.

After him came the troll. But now when the master reached the rock, he gave one leap into the air, and, when he struck the water, there he was a silver fish again.

Well, after that it was a long swim back again; but at last the master reached that place where he had entered the stream. So there he took his own form again and was soon back in the house where Jacob was waiting for him.

By now it was evening again; and so the second day had passed, and only one day remained.

On the morrow Jacob did n't send any servants with the White Pipe to Herr Mayor. No, he just tucked it under

his arm, and presently, *rap, tap, tap,* might he see Herr Mayor? Yes, he was told, Herr Mayor was before the fire in the big hall.

And now Jacob had come for Gretchen. See, here was the White Pipe. And yesterday he had sent Herr Mayor the Pewter Tankard. What had Herr Mayor to say in the matter now?

Of course Herr Mayor had to hem and haw a bit, but in the end it came about that Jacob was to have Gretchen. For now that Herr Mayor had a good pipe that would always be full, and a tankard of good brown ale always a-simmering on the hearth, why, he could think of no more to ask for. As for Jacob, well, he was n't the kind of a lad that would take no for an answer. So everything was made ready for the wedding which was to be held that very evening.

When Jacob got that word from Herr Mayor, he was as gay as might be, and he went back and ordered this, that, and the other from the master, until there was never a thing a body might think of that was n't to be found somewhere about the house. All day he was whistling, and singing, and trying on his fine clothes, and never once did he think of that bargain he had made with the master. This might not be said of the master, though, and already he had begun to chuckle and count the hours, for on the morrow he would have Jacob whistling a new tune.

Such a fine wedding as that was would take many a page to tell of. But this you must know: the table was loaded down with all manner of good things to eat, there was singing and dancing, and never a soul there but thought he had never had such a fine time before.

The Master Makes a Bargain

While all this was going on, the master was sitting at home in the corner.

Then the clock struck nine.

"Aha!" said the master. "I will just take a bit of a stroll

The Wedding Coach.

over to Herr Mayor's house, and see how matters are going with my servant Jacob." And he chuckled when he thought how the lad had but three hours more of freedom.

"Ten!" struck the clock at Herr Mayor's house, and there was the master, dressed like a servant, grinning and laugh-

ing, and counting the hours — one — two — three — just as they were being struck by the clock.

Eleven o'clock! And this time the master was grinning quite dreadfully, and calling "One! Two! Three!" after each stroke.

By and by it was just on the tick of twelve! Never had Jacob seen such a look as that which was then on the face of the master!

"One!" struck the clock. "One!" cried the master. "Two," struck the clock. "Two!" cried the master.

Then Jacob began to think of his bargain, and that the three days were almost over. My, how he did wish that servant would n't count the hours and laugh so fiendishly!

"Ten," struck the clock. "Ten!" cried the master. "Eleven," struck the clock. "Eleven!" cried the master with his face grinning more dreadfully than ever.

And now Jacob could stand it no longer.

"Out of my sight!" he cried. "Out of my sight! I wish we may never see you more!"

"Twelve!" struck the clock — but it did n't strike before Jacob had uttered his wish, and for three days the master was to serve Jacob and grant his every wish — that, you remember, was the bargain they had made.

How the master did yell when he heard that wish! And now he was a servant no longer, neither was he the fine gentleman that had come that other day into Noodleburg. No, he was now a great ugly creature with horns upon his head and one foot like the hoof of a horse. Out of the window he leaped, and up the street he ran, and such a noise as he made was like to wake the whole town.

The Master Makes a Bargain

Well, after the wedding, Jacob and Gretchen went to live at Jacob's house, and there they were as happy as might be. As for the master, the last they ever saw of him was when he leaped out of the window of Herr Mayor's house, and a lucky matter that was for Jacob and Gretchen, and no mistake.

The Lad *and* Luck's House

HERE to-day, and there to-morrow. That is the way it is with some folks, for no sooner do they *rap, tap, tap* at the front gate of one town, than they must be tucking their toes in the dust on the road to the next.

Yes, that is the way it is with some folks; and some there are who must always be crimping and primping and fol-de-roling. Off they go, dancing and prancing, at this ball to-night and that ball to-morrow night, and then all day long they are sleepy and cross. But none of that for me. When night comes I like to toast my shins in a cozy corner by the fire, with the good wife a-knitting and the yellow yarn dancing over the amber needles. That 's the time the fairies come. I love to watch them skipping and romping in the blaze — blue ones, red ones, green ones, and sometimes, on the rarest occasions, there comes a little one of pure gold.

And in summer — my! but that is when the fairies have the good times! Out in the garden, in the honeysuckles and the corn-flowers, the delphiniums and the periwinkles, and most especially in the roses, how the fairies do skip and jump and play tag! And oh, they tell such wonderful stories and sing such wonderful songs! Sometimes the wrens and

thrushes accompany them, and then there is the finest concert a body ever heard!

It takes sharp eyes to see a fairy; and when you do see one, you must never jump or make a loud noise or frown. That will scare the fairy away. Most of all, though, fairies love children, and I think it is only when old people keep a little bit of childhood in their hearts that fairies come to them. That is why I am going to try and never grow old; not old in my heart, anyway, because, you see, I want the fairies always to come to me, especially winter nights before the fire. I always have a flower or two standing around on the mantel or table to tempt them, because in all the world nothing makes a fairy as happy as do flowers.

Well, one winter afternoon, when all the family were off gadding, nothing would do but I must put on my big coat and heavy boots and tramp through the snow to Neighbor Fairborn's. I grumbled and fussed as usual, for it is never easy to get me started, and in the end, of course, I was sorry; for when we came to Neighbor Fairborn's, there was a fine fire burning on the hearth, and some tea brewing, and a big comfortable chair with pillows. There, too, were Billy and Bobbs looking at wonderful pictures of ships, and trains of cars, and oceans, and bridges.

So I said "Oho! This is just the place for me!" for I knew what was going to happen. No one else knew what was going to happen, and they kept up their jabber, jabber about all sorts of uninteresting things. But as for me, I just found a comfortable place among the cushions and pillows and kept very quiet. Pretty soon a big green flame went twisting up the chimney; then there was a big red one, and a blue one,

and a purple one, and then one of golden yellow. But the yellow one was not a common, every-day flame. No, sir, the yellow flame was really a beautiful Fairy, all in a robe of golden gossamer and rich jewels. I wondered if Billy and Bobbs saw her. But just then some one said, "Hush! don't make a noise." That always distracts children, so they missed her. I was sorry, too, for the Fairy was looking right at them, and with such a serious expression that I knew there were important matters on her mind.

Well, it was n't long before the Fairy was perched upon my shoulder and whispering in my ear; and as I listened, I was filled with such wonder that never a word did I hear of what was being said in the room, no, not one single word did I hear, save only what was whispered by the Fairy.

This is what the Fairy told me:

"The Marsh King has stolen Princess Bluebell and imprisoned her on the top of Glass Mountain."

"My! Oh my!" said I. Not out loud, because it is n't necessary to speak out loud when talking to the fairies. You just think "My! Oh my!" and the fairy hears it quite as distinctly as though it were really spoken.

"Yes," continued the Fairy. "Princess Bluebell is locked in the topmost tower of Glass Mountain, and the Marsh King has vowed and declared she shall never be free until she consents to marry Hook Nose."

"Hook Nose?" said I. "Why, that is the Marsh King's oldest son, and the ugliest Ogre in all the four quarters of the world! Never could the Marsh King be so cruel as to compel the lovely Princess Bluebell to marry the ugly Ogre Hook Nose!"

"Yes," said the Fairy, "it is really true. A great pity it is, too, for now her mother, the Queen of the Blue Mountains, weeps day long and night long in her palace, while the King of the Blue Mountains rides at the head of twenty thousand knights in gold and silver armor to make war on the King of the Marshes."

"Twenty thousand knights in gold and silver armor!" said I. "Why, that is a marvelously big army. Surely the Marsh King cannot array a host to compare with that. Already he must have been captured and the Princess Bluebell freed."

"The ugliest Ogre in all the four quarters of the world."

"So I thought, too," said the Fairy; "for there are few kings that could withstand the onslaught of twenty thousand knights in gold and silver armor, especially when led by the King of the Blue

Mountains. But Will-o'-the-wisp, who has just come from the marshes, tells me the Marsh King sits on his throne in the heart of the great swamps and only laughs; for, you see, when the heralds blow upon their bugles, and the knights fix their lances and ride forth to the charge, why, no sooner do they reach the low lands than the great bogs and quagmires swallow them up."

"Yes," I thought, "that must certainly be true, for the marsh lands are dotted with green, shiny bogs and shallow, muddy pools where no horse and rider could possibly travel. But," said I, "were the brave knights really and truly swallowed up?"

"Yes, at first those in the front ranks were," said the Fairy; "but Will-o'-the-wisp tells me their companions quickly rescued them, so that not a single life was lost. Only, of course, their gold and silver armor was all spoiled; at least, it had to be sent back to the Blue Mountains to be cleaned."

The situation was indeed serious, and I knew the Marsh King would not leave a stone unturned to win his way against the King of the Blue Mountains. This is why:

Twenty years ago, Hans of Noodleburg found the Hoop of Gold and released the King of the Blue Mountains from a terrible enchantment. In all that while nothing had ever been heard of the wicked Witch who wrought the enchantment. It did n't take long for me to put one and one together and make two, and two and two together and make four. Then the whole story was as clear to me as crystal. Was n't the Marsh King a brother of the Witch? Was n't this just the sort of trick he would be apt to play in order to have

revenge? Yes, there was no doubt; the Marsh King had imprisoned Princess Bluebell and would marry her to Hook Nose just to have revenge on the King and Queen of the Blue Mountains.

Well, all of this thinking and reasoning and remembering was just the same as talking out loud to the Fairy; she listened very patiently, and knew every word that passed through my mind. No doubt she thought me very dull, and that I was losing precious moments. One can never tell what a fairy is thinking; and I suspect they often lose patience at our slow wit, though, of course, they are too polite to mention it.

"What is to be done?" said I. "Have you worked out any plan?"

Well, to make a long story short, the Fairy *had* worked out a plan, and it was neither more nor less than just this: Billy and Bobbs must mount a fine white charger and ride over hill and dale to Noodleburg, where they are to hunt about — here, there, and around the corner — for Luck's House. In Luck's House are great chests full of wonderful treasures, and tucked away on the shelves there is plenty of this, that, and the other, such as would surely be worth having by any one who would win a princess.

Yes, that is what it had come to now. The King of the Blue Mountains had made a proclamation that he who should release the Princess would win her for his bride.

Mounting a white charger and riding to Noodleburg — surely it would take brave lads to do that, to say nothing of the bravery of entering Luck's House. Did the Fairy think Billy and Bobbs could do that?

Yes, the Fairy had no doubt at all. Listen! The Fairy

had a fine plan — certainly such a plan as would have been thought of only by a fairy.

This is the plan, and it all really happened:

That night, when Billy and Bobbs were asleep, the Fairy came to them on a moonbeam; with her she had a white horse with a long curly mane and tail. Then, over hill and dale, off rode Billy and Bobbs to Noodleburg. Over hill and dale to Luck's House, where they knew just what to take and what to leave. Then, mounting their horse, over hill and dale, back home they came, long, long before the cock crowed and the sun came up over Neighbor Shultz's garage.

Now, if I were ever astride a fine white charger with my feet in the stirrups, riding clipperty-crick over hill and dale to Luck's House, I know what *I* would choose when I got there. But with children I suppose it is different; at least it was with Billy and Bobbs. What they chose, or anyway all Nurse found in their pockets in the morning, was just one round pebble, one black feather from a bird's wing, one piece of string, and one chip of wood, all of which she promptly threw out of the window.

Lucky it was, I can tell you, that a little bird saw where Nurse threw these treasures; and lucky, too, that the little bird told the Fairy, or else the Princess Bluebell never would — but wait! We are getting on too far in the story.

When the King of the Blue Mountains made his proclamation that he who released Princess Bluebell would win her for his bride, he certainly caused a great stir, and brave knights came from every corner of the kingdom. To see them riding out of the town gates was a wonderful sight. The gray trappings and the glint of sunlight on the polished armor and

swords and spears made such a brave showing that, had it not been for his terrible swamps and bogs and the protection they gave him, the Marsh King must have trembled in fear.

Now it happened that beside the town gates, at a little rickety table, there sat an old lady, and to each knight, as he passed, she cried, " Come buy my treasures! " But when the knights looked on the table, they only laughed, for the treasures were neither more nor less than a round pebble, a black feather, a piece of string, and a chip of wood. No one knew they came from Luck's House, and so no one bought.

When it was nearly evening and the last knight had ridden through the gates, there came a poor lad who had neither horse nor sword. He thought it would be fine to rescue the Princess, because she must be very much afraid away up there on the top of Glass Mountain. But as for marrying her, that would be quite another matter. Perhaps she liked somebody else, and of course she would never think of marrying such a poor lad.

Just then the lad spied the little old lady.

" Oho! " said he, " I have only a penny or two, but these odds and ends cannot be worth much, and perhaps the old lady needs the money."

When the little old lady saw the twinkle in the lad's eyes, she knew he would be her customer, and it was n't long before she had the pennies and he had her treasures. Then off he went down the road, whistling merrily. Had he turned to look back, he might have wondered what had become of the old lady, for she was nowhere in sight. I, for one, think she was the Fairy; but I am not certain.

When it was nearly evening and the poor lad came to

the edge of the marsh lands, he saw all the knights riding hither and thither and not knowing which way to turn. As it happened at first with the King's army, so it happened now: every rider who dared to venture into the marsh land soon found himself floundering in the mire.

"Here is a pretty pass!" thought the lad. "At this rate it will be many a day before the Princess is freed, and old Hook Nose will most likely be the bridegroom." Then, feeling the round pebble in his pocket, he took it out and shied it at the water to see it skip.

Crash! Bang!

No sooner did the pebble strike the water than every shiny, open pool became solid stone, firm as flint and as easy to ride on as the cobbles in our town. No sooner did the knights see this firm, hard road-bed than, with a glad shout, away they rode to capture the Marsh King.

No one took even a single glance at the lad, and no one offered him a ride, so off he trudged on foot.

In the heart of the marsh lands there was a great lake of seething, boiling water, on which no ship could ever sail. In the center of the lake there was a tall mountain all of glass, which no man could ever climb, and on top of the mountain was the castle in which was imprisoned Princess Bluebell. To this castle the Marsh King had fled with Hook Nose. How they ever reached it, I do not know, but there they were, safe and sound, when the knights rode up to the edge of the lake.

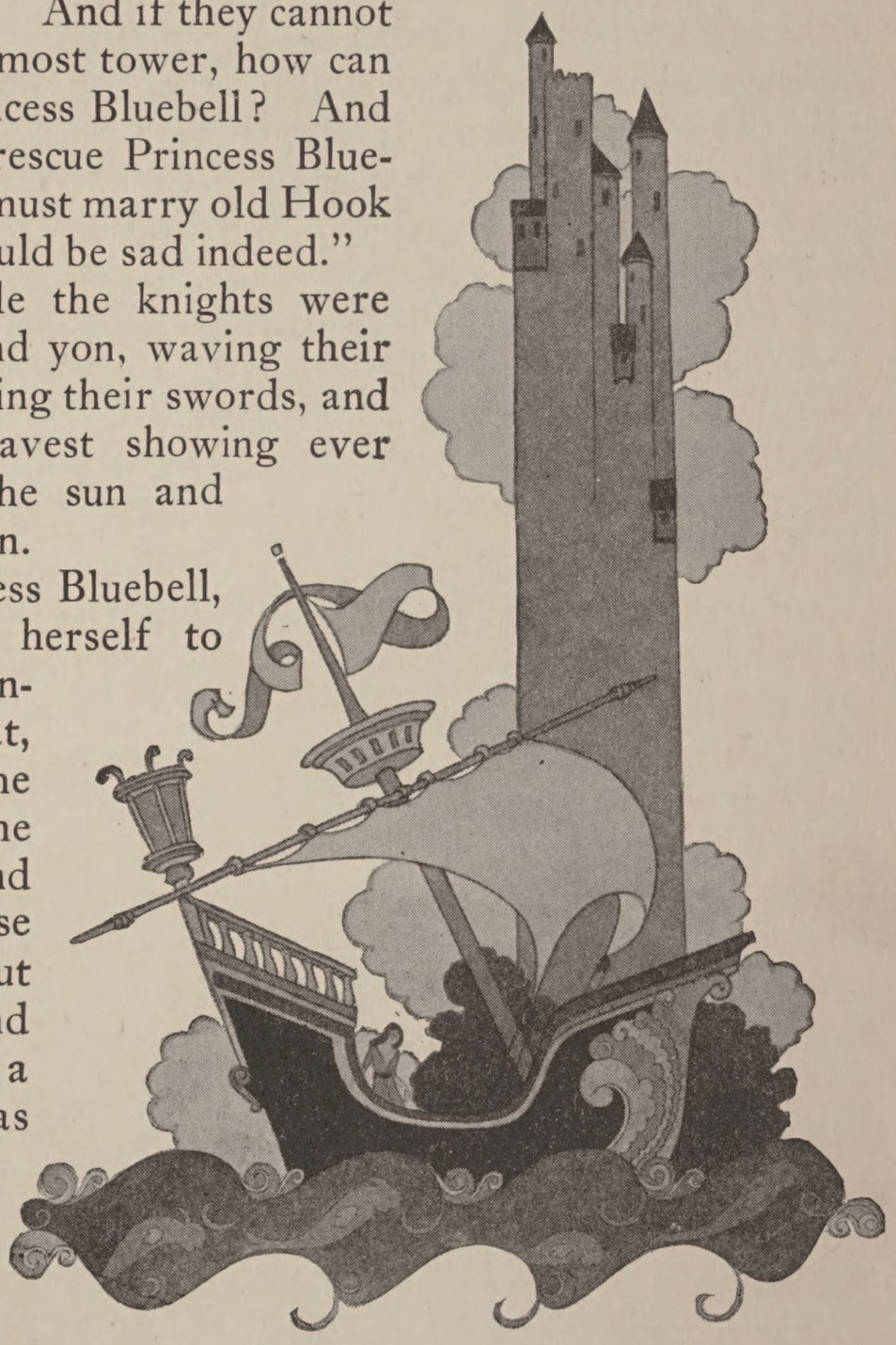
"My, this is a fine sight!" thought the lad, when he at last reached the lake. "But how are the knights ever going to get to the Glass Mountain across the boiling lake? And

if they reach the mountain, how can they ever climb to the topmost tower? And if they cannot climb to the topmost tower, how can they rescue Princess Bluebell? And if they do not rescue Princess Bluebell, surely she must marry old Hook Nose, which would be sad indeed."

All this while the knights were riding hither and yon, waving their spears and flashing their swords, and making the bravest showing ever seen west of the sun and east of the moon.

As for Princess Bluebell, she had cried herself to sleep. No wonder was that, either, for she could hear the Marsh King and Hook Nose tramping about downstairs and making such a noise as was quite enough to frighten any one.

Though the lad was as



"The beautiful ship with silken sails."

brave as the bravest, it would have been a wish wasted for him to want a horse and armor, but to wish for fine clothes and buckled shoes — that was only natural, so torn and tattered were his own. "Well, at least I have a plume for my cap!" said he, and into it he tucked the black feather he had bought for a penny from the old lady at the gate back yonder. Then he put the cap on his head and —

Whisk! Boom!

Away through the air flew the lad. Over the knights and horses, over the boiling lake, over the Glass Mountain and into the window of the topmost tower he flew, right into the presence of Princess Bluebell, who opened her eyes and looked upon him in fear and wonder.

Up went the lad's hands to doff his cap, for he would have bowed politely. But his hand found only his hair, for his cap had been brushed from his head as he passed through the window.

Of course, all the knights thought it a strange sight to see the lad flying through the air. As for the Marsh King and Hook Nose, they were so frightened they knew not which way to turn; and when they saw the cap and feather come tumbling down, they tried to run, stubbed their toes, and went tumbling topsy-turvy into the boiling lake!

The wild shriek they gave as they reached the water made Princess Bluebell run quickly to the window. When she saw what had happened to the Marsh King and Hook Nose, and saw all the great array of knights on the opposite shore, she thought: "At last I have been rescued, and this raggedy, tattered lad must be a servant of the great prince, or king, or

knight who has freed me. Now we will go home and have a fine wedding."

And then she ordered the lad to do this, that, and the other, and she smoothed her dress, and brushed her hair, and made ready to greet the fine knight whom, every second, she expected to see coming through the door.

"Musicians played in the palace gardens."

Meanwhile, as the lad looked about and saw the high, smooth walls of the tower and the steep glass sides of the mountain and could find no way to the bottom, he thought, "This is a fine fix we are in!" A fine fix it would have been, too, if it had not been for the piece of string that came from Luck's House and

was bought for a penny back yonder. Yes, the string helped them now; for no sooner did the lad lower it from a window than:

Flipperty flap!

The finest and safest rope-ladder ever seen was hanging from the topmost tower to the very bottom of the mountain!

This way and that way swung the ladder as, step by step, down went Princess Bluebell and the lad. All the while the Princess wondered what had become of the knight, for she thought, "Surely this raggedy, tattered lad cannot be my rescuer!"

At last they reached the bottom of the ladder and the edge of the boiling lake. Now there was left only the small chip of wood — the chip brought by Billy and Bobbs from Luck's House.

Out of his pocket the lad took the chip, and into the lake he threw it. Then —

Whistle and whoop!

Riding gracefully on the waves was — not a chip. No! The chip had become a beautiful ship with silken sails, and painted sides, and polished deck — such a ship as one might travel in all around the world and back again and never see its equal.

Well, as they sailed toward the other shore, the Princess wondered why the raggedy, tattered lad was her only companion, and, although she thought him a fine enough looking lad, she said: "Of course, he can't be the one who has freed me. My real rescuer must be one of the fine knights on the bank yonder."

The Princess Bluebell Tries on Her New Gowns.

Thus it was that, when the ship reached the shore, Princess Bluebell rode away with all the King's knights. Once she looked at the lad to say "Thank you," but he was coiling a rope and did not see her. So off she rode, and off rode the knights, and the lad was left behind, and —

In his pocket nothing was left from Luck's House!

The King and Queen were glad enough to have the Princess, I can tell you, and such a celebration as they made I would walk many a mile to see. Musicians played in the palace gardens. Clowns and mountebanks did tricks in the royal theater. Ladies wore their finest gowns, and every one had the best time ever known in the Blue Mountains.

Meanwhile, grand preparation was being made for the wedding. Artists redecorated the palace. The most famous dressmakers and milliners prepared the trousseau. The greatest chef designed and baked a wonderful wedding-cake, and no money was spared to make the event the grandest ever seen in all the world.

"But who is to be the bridegroom?" That was the question the townsfolk were asking. Every knight who had ridden into the marsh lands hoped to be the favored one, and each day so many claimed the honor that all the wise men in the kingdom could not decide which it should be.

As for Princess Bluebell, she was not at all worried. The King had said that he who freed her from the tower should win her for his bride, so of course there would be a wedding. But as the days came and went and no one proved his claim, the King finally announced a great tournament, and vowed and declared that the victor should be proclaimed the choice of the Princess.

The Green Knight Challenges the Victor.

When the King's heralds, astride their beautiful chargers and blowing great blasts upon their golden trumpets, rode to the four corners of the kingdom and cried the news of the tournament, the knights all gave a great cheer, for each one thought he surely would be the victor.

At last the great day arrived, and so many were the knights that rode to the tournament that ten men could not count them, nor twenty men their banners and the squires that attended them.

All day long the knights rode thundering forth and back across the plain with shield on arm and lance at rest, and always riders hurtled together with a splitting of shields and a splintering of lances, until so many had been tumbled from off their horses that only one remained.

I wish *I* could have been at that tournament. Some folks tell me it was the most wondrous ever seen in all the world — even surpassing any ever held by King Arthur. I wish, too, I could have seen the Green Knight when he rode thundering onto the field and challenged the victor. Where he came from, nobody seemed to know. My, how he could ride! Why, the victor, the knight who had tossed all the other knights into the dust, was tumbled out of his saddle so quickly one had n't time to even say "*Scat.*"

Of course, there could be no doubt about it now. The Green Knight was declared the winner of the tournament, and off he rode with Princess Bluebell to the castle. All the bells in the city were ringing, and the wedding was to be held at six o'clock.

Some said the Green Knight was a great prince, and some said he was a powerful king. As for Princess Bluebell, she

said nothing at all. But if you had been with her in the topmost tower of the Glass Mountain, and especialiy, if you had been carried down the rope-ladder and had sailed in the painted ship on the boiling lake, I think you would have taken a peek out of the corner of *your* eye, just as the Princess did. Then you would have said just as the Princess said:

"Why, the Green Knight is neither more nor less than —"

Who do you think?

"THE POOR LAD!"

Yes, sure enough! The Green Knight was really the lad who had rescued the Princess. Now a raggedy, tattered lad no longer, but a rich and powerful king. All the treasures that had once belonged to the Marsh King and Hook Nose now belonged to the lad. For he was the really true and rightful king of that country.

Of course the Green Knight and Princess Bluebell were married and will live happily ever after. When they read this history, and learn of the visit to Luck's House, they will be glad Billy and Bobbs made such a wise choice. As for nurses who look through boys' pockets, and throw away stones, and strings, and other treasures, and say, "Bah! Silly truck!" — why, they had just better be careful, because I am not sure Hook Nose was drowned, and if he ever catches them and locks *them* in the topmost tower of Glass Mountain, they will be sorry they were so stupid.

The Five Golden Candlesticks

ONCE upon a time there lived a man of some threescore and ten years who was such a student that folks said no problem might be made in either algebra or geometry, however difficult it might be, that he could not easily give its solution. Indeed, so great was his learning and so broad his wisdom, that some there were who even whispered he had occult powers, and some who declared he delved in Black Arts.

Now of these latter matters I have no definite knowledge, and so cannot say whether they were true or false. But though I like little to listen to gossips, there fell a word here and a word there which came in at one ear and did not run out at the other, so that in the end, willy-nilly, I must needs think of the Old Man that of strange lore he knew somewhat more than a little.

On a day in spring, when all the world was glad with birds singing in the leafy branches, and yellow daffodils laughing in the green fields, the man called to him his two sons, and said: "Now has the time come when it were well for you to go out into the world, where more may be seen than is to be found within the four walls of this house or the four corners of the town. There is little that I can give you of gold to aid you on your journey, for so it is with a student that often

he is ill paid. Yet, by good hap, you need not go wholly penniless. See! here are Five Golden Candlesticks — little, and easy to carry. Keep them ever by you, and 't is like they will aid you in time of need. Here also are a few silver pennies. Spend them wisely."

No sooner did their father cease speaking than the elder son stepped briskly forward and held out his hands to receive the candlesticks and the silver pennies, for he loved pleasure and he was thinking how much of it these would buy out in the big world.

As for the younger son, he was not in such a big hurry; and if one had looked into the corners of his two eyes, there might have been seen a pearly tear in each, for he thought: "My father is now an old man, and mayhap, when I return from my travels, he too may have gone on a journey, and, belike, this day I am saying a last good-by."

Then he thought of the Five Golden Candlesticks, and how they had always stood on the mantel in the parlor, and how in his father's study were five little ones of pewter, and he said:

"Father, thou hast given us the Five Golden Candlesticks, and my half will I gladly give to my brother. Also, thou hast given us a handful of silver pennies, and my half of these will I give to my brother. Yet will I ask of thee a gift that I may have as my very own — no less a one, in fact, than the Five Pewter Candlesticks that, from a child knee-high, I have seen each night alight in thy study."

Now, while the young lad was speaking, his brother could hardly keep from laughing. "Silly! Silly! Silly!" he kept saying, "to give up gold and silver and take only pewter!"

But he did n't say this out loud, for he was glad to have his brother's share and the good times it would buy him.

As for the father, he did n't say no to the proposition, and there was such a merry twinkle in his eyes that, had I been the elder brother, I would have thought twice before entering into such a bargain.

Well, when the sun was in the west, with its slant rays throwing cool shadows along the highway, off stepped the two lads. In the knapsack of the elder were the Five Golden Candlesticks, and in his pocket a merry jingle of silver pennies. In the knapsack of the younger were the Five Pewter Candlesticks, and in his pocket only a cold pasty. But at his side there was slung a lute; and as he listened to the evening carols of the birds and the little breezes astir in the leafage, he composed sweet notes and thought that on the morrow, were his heart less heavy over parting with his father, he would play them upon his lute and sing such words as might come to him.

Night drew on ere they reached the first town, and the moon rose silver above the tree-tops. Nothing would do now but the eldest son must hunt out the finest inn and buy the best of everything. As for the younger lad, why, he still had a bit of cold pasty in his pocket, and what could there be finer than a mossy bed beneath an oak?

On the morrow the young lad was up with the sun, and when he had bathed in the river and had eaten the last of his pasty and washed it down with a good drink of cold spring water, he set his back to the trunk of the big oak, and, tuning his lute, sang such a song as befitted his mood and the joy

of a May morning. For so it is with a lad, that sorrow runs off him lightly and with the new day comes a new hope.

Meanwhile, at the inn the elder son slept soundly, and in his pocket there were not two silver pennies to jingle one against the other, neither was there even one penny.

Here we will leave the two lads for a while and tell of the Young Queen who ruled in that realm. So beautiful she was and good that all had been joy and happiness throughout the land if only she would consent to choose a husband, and thus save the bitter strife and enmity of the princes who sought her hand and who were forever holding tournaments and fighting battles to show their bravery and win the approval of the Queen.

The Lord High Chancellor and all the dignitaries of the court held councils until far into the night. The wise men searched their great books, and the astronomers studied the stars. But no remedy could be found.

Thus it was that on the morning in May when the young lad sang beneath the oak-tree the Young Queen, weary of the pleading and importuning of her elders, having retired to her country cottage some miles from the palace, heard such sweet singing as she had never heard in all the days of her life. So she arose and opened wide the casement. Nor being content with that, she straightway dressed, and, hurrying to the garden, went to the outermost bounds and looked over the hedge, where she saw the young lad and heard the words of his song and the sweet notes of the lute.

Only one look did she take, when her heart gave such a bound that off she sped light of foot through the grass to

the gardener's cottage. "See, Gardener," she said, "so and so and so."

Well, the end of the matter was just this: hardly had the lad finished his song when the old gardener was inviting him into the garden, where whom should he see but the Young Queen. Sharper eyes it would take than yours or mine or the lad's to know her for the Queen, for she wore no royal robes, but was dressed in a smock and big hat, for all the world like the gardener's daughter. This, in very truth, was what the lad deemed her, and he thought that nowhere in all the world might be found a maid more beautiful.

After that, as you will quickly guess, it was n't long before the lad was bowing, and saying "How do you do?" to the Young Queen. Then, how would the lad like to come and work in the garden? See! there was much planting and pruning to be done, and the gardener sorely needed an assistant.

Of course the lad did n't say "No" to that proposition; and so he became assistant gardener, and each day worked among the flowers with the Young Queen. In the evening he would play upon his lute, and sing sweet songs of birds and brooks and the whispering wind in the branches, of shepherds and shepherdesses and the tending of gentle flocks. All the while, as he played and sang, the Young Queen listened, and with every song her heart grew fonder and fonder of the lad, and she sighed and wished she were in very truth the gardener's daughter, so that she might remain forever in the garden and never have to attend to weighty affairs of state. Also, being a Queen, she could not wed her assistant gardener, which in all the world was the thing she most desired. As for the lad, never before, in all the days of his life, had he

"She looked over the hedge, where she saw the young lad and heard the sweet notes of his lute."

known such sweet contentment, and he thought: "Never was born a maid so dear and kind. Mayhap, in time, she will care as much for me as I do now for her." So glad of heart he was, and so joyous, that sad indeed to him were those days on which the Queen must needs go to the palace. Sad, also, were those days for the Queen; and all through the long afternoons, as the lad watched the highway for her return, she too was all impatience.

Where the Queen went at such times the lad did not know, but as she always carried an armful of beautiful flowers, he thought, "Mayhap it is to some one who is ill, or to her old nurse, or to some friend." Had the lad walked to the brow of the first hill, he would have seen how, in the hollow beyond, there awaited the Queen a coach and two pairs of prancing horses, with coachmen, footmen, and outriders.

Meanwhile, the elder brother was living merrily at the inn, going to masquerades and balls at night and entertaining royally. One by one he sold the Golden Candlesticks, until none remained. Then, when the last penny was spent and the landlord was for turning him out into the street, he thought, "Now I will find my brother, and perhaps I can borrow something from him."

So it was that, on a day when the Queen was at the palace and the young lad was at work among the roses, who should come stepping up the path but the elder brother. When the elder brother went down the path again and the gate clicked behind his back, the silver pennies that jingled in his pocket were all the young lad's savings.

On this same day there were stormy councils held at the palace. The elders and venerables one and all insisted and

demanded that the Young Queen should choose a husband. What the Prime Minister could have done under such trying circumstances, it would be hard to guess. But just then there came to the palace an old man with somewhat more of wisdom than his fellows. Straightway this old man went to the Queen, and, though I know naught of what he said, this I do know, that no sooner had he departed than there was made a proclamation bearing the Queen's royal seal.

This was the proclamation: "To him who proves his bravery by bringing the Black Diamond from the Cave of Darkness in the Valley of the Four Winds, the Queen will extend her royal favor and give him favorable consideration in the suit for her hand."

Heralds now rode forth with such speed that ere night not a hamlet or village throughout the realm was without the news.

In the evening, when the Queen returned to the cottage, the lad was waiting for her in the rose-garden. There she told him of the proclamation.

"The Black Diamond from the Cave of Darkness in the Valley of the Four Winds! That certainly is a perilous undertaking," said the lad. "Yet it might be accomplished if one but had the sight of an owl. Belike too, when the Queen has the Diamond, she will want the Rose with the Heart of Pearl from the Garden of the Five Gates, and the Bird with Wings of Gold from the Fairy Forest, and the Pomegranate with Heart of Honey from the Ogres' Orchard. After that, before she bestows her heart and hand, she will demand —"

"But," interrupted the Queen, her eyes big with wonder, "how did you know all this?"

"Oh, I am but guessing," answered the lad, as he picked a few notes upon the strings of his lute. "My father is a great student, and from him I learned a little of this, that and the other, so 't is but the same as putting together two and two to make four." Then he struck a chord upon his lute, and sang of the moon and roses and love in such wise that the Queen cast down her eyes, not daring to look upon him, for she knew the words were made for her.

When the song was finished, the Queen held out her hand to the lad, and though he kept it overlong to say good night, she did not withdraw it, but looked upon him full kindly, and thought: "Thou art a dear lad and a good gardener, and dost play and sing full sweetly; and day long hast thou been such a companion as never might a maid wish better. Yet do you deem of me that I am but the gardener's daughter, and now I am sore grieved to have deceived you, for I am a great and mighty Queen and may not wed a gardener. And more the pity is that, too, for unto a gardener have I given my heart, and with him above all others would I share my throne." All of this the Queen thought ere she withdrew her hand from the lad's, but she only said:

"Good night, dear lad, for to-morrow I must depart early."

Said the lad: "Now has sorrow blighted the garden, and the sunlight is hidden behind a cloud; no more will bud burst into bloom, or bird sing to its mate until you come again."

"Oh, dear lad," thought the Queen, "if only *you* could go to the Cave of Darkness in the Valley of the Four Winds and get for me the Black Diamond!" Yet of this thought she said nothing to the lad, but only sighed, and, again bidding him good night, went into the cottage.

When the lad was alone, he took his lute and went to the far end of the garden, as was ever his custom. And he thought that this night, above all others, he would compose such a song as might tell of all the hope within his heart.

Yet did the lad not sing the song on that night, nor the next, nor the night after, for it happened that, as he came to the end of the path near a hedge of clipped yew, he heard voices on the overside. Now, though at first he did not intend to listen, some of the words so held his attention that in the end he heard them all. No wonder was that either, for the talk ran all about the Queen's proclamation, and in it there was said that, if one only had the Pewter Candlestick that had once belonged to King Solomon the Wise, it would be no hard task to win the Black Diamond.

No sooner did the lad hear these words than off he sped to his room, for on the Pewter Candlesticks that had been given him by his father, and which now stood upon his mantel, there were engraved the hieroglyphics which he knew full well to be the seal of Solomon the Wise. Also, on each there was a strange device, the meaning of which until now he had never known. On that particular Candlestick which he quickly chose, and in which he lit a candle, there was carven a round cat's-eye.

"By the mighty wisdom and power of Solomon I bid thee give me sight beyond that of mortal man." These were the words that had been spoken on the other side of the yew hedge; and hardly had the lad finished repeating them, than the flame glowed and glimmered with such a light as is seldom seen in the world. Then it died down, flickered, and

went out; and though the room was left in total darkness, to the sight of the lad all was as clear as bright sunlight.

To tell all that happened on the trip that night to the Valley of the Four Winds and the Cave of Darkness would take far too long. On the road the lad passed knights and princes who were lost in the murky forests or stuck in the mires and bogs. When at last he reached the heart of the Valley and the entrance to the Cave of Darkness, there was no sign of life save only the doleful hooting of the great owls in the topmost branches of the trees and the slimy rustle of the reptiles that, without sight, moved from rock to pool and pool to rock in the dark, oozy depths of the Cave. All of this the lad could see as plain as could be. Also, he had no trouble in finding the Black Diamond; the Pewter Candlestick had given him such sight as made murky darkness as bright as day.

Of the return journey there is only this to tell, that, of those he had passed in the night, all now were discouraged and turning back. No one saw him come out of the Valley of the Four Winds, and of course no one knew he had the Black Diamond. What he would do with it he had n't thought, but this he did know: he would not go to the palace and present it to the Queen, for, even though she were as fair as folk said of her, yet was there one that to him was more fair, and belike he would give the Diamond to her.

When at last he reached the hollow near the cottage, there stood the royal coach, and some one was just stepping in at the door. Then the whips cracked, and away dashed the horses and outriders. As the coach passed him, the curtains were drawn, so he did not see the occupant; but when

he came to the cottage, the sun was an hour high and the maid had already departed.

That day, as the lad was pruning the roses, who should come through the gate again but the elder brother. He had spent all his money, and that was a pity too; for if he only had a little, he would go to the Valley of the Four Winds and get the Black Diamond. After that, he would marry the Queen, sit on the throne, and be a King.

Well, if that was all the elder brother needed to make him a King, why here was the Black Diamond and welcome.

Yes, that is what the young lad said. Of course, he did n't know that the maid he thought to be the gardener's daughter was really the Queen, and I, for one, am sorry she did not tell him on the night before, in place of just thinking about it and keeping her thoughts to herself. However, the milk was spilled now, so of what avail to bemoan it? Already the elder brother was only a speck far down the road.

When it was known that the elder brother had the Black Diamond, the innkeeper scraped and bowed and paid him such honor as though he were already the King. Tailors dressed him sumptuously, servants were provided. A beautiful coach drove up, and off went the elder brother with the Black Diamond to the Queen.

That night, when the Queen returned to the cottage, she seemed somewhat sad. But she told the lad all the news, and how the town was all abuzz, and saying there would soon be a wedding up at the palace.

" But," said she, " the Queen has now asked for the Rose with the Heart of Pearl from the Garden of the Five Gates."

" Yes," said the lad, " and that will be a harder task than

the other; for how is one to find a single rose among a million?"

"I do not know," said the Queen, "but a good rose-grower might find a way." Then she said good night and went into the cottage.

That night, after the lad had played a tune or two upon his lute, he went to his room, and no sooner did he look at the Candlesticks than he doubled up with laughter, for the device engraved upon the second seemed double the usual size and without doubt it was that of a nose.

I won't take time to tell you all about how the lad lit a candle in the second Candlestick, and how immediately he had power to know every fragrant scent of every flower that ever grew and every individual scent of every species. Neither will I tell you all about his trip to the Garden of the Five Gates, and the finding of the Rose with the Heart of Pearl. Also, we will not take time to tell about his return the next morning one hour after sunrise, and about passing the coach in the hollow, and about the maid having departed. Of course, too, you must know that where the elder brother found luck on one day he would look for it again on the next. Well, all of this is exactly what happened.

Yes, the Queen now had the Rose with the Heart of Pearl that had been brought to her by the elder brother. All of this she told to the lad that night upon her return to the cottage. Also, she said that now the Queen had asked for the Bird with Wings of Gold.

"That will be a difficult accomplishment," said the lad.

"It should be easy for one who knows the bird's song," said the Queen.

That night it happened as on the night before, only this time it was the third Candlestick that the lad lit, upon which was engraved an ear. Then there was no song of bird, no matter how faint, that the lad could not hear.

Well, everything happened now as it had before; the lad found the Bird with Wings of Gold, which the elder brother gave to the Queen. She now asked for the Pomegranate with Heart of Honey.

All of this the Queen told to the lad that night.

"A Pomegranate with Heart of Honey may not be found by every one," said the lad.

"It might be found by a gardener," said the Queen, and there were tears in her voice.

This time it was the Candlestick on which was graven a tongue that gave the lad the power to taste all the wonderful flavors of the world. Of course, with this wonderful power, he found the Pomegranate with Heart of Honey. Of course, too, it was the elder brother who took the Pomegranate to the Queen.

That night, when the Queen returned to the cottage, she was almost too sad to talk, for on the morrow she would stand in line with five hundred other maidens. All would be of the same height, all dressed alike, and all blindfolded. Each maiden would hold out one hand, and the suitors passing down the line would touch each hand. Thus must be determined which was the Queen.

But this was not all the sauce to that pudding. No indeed! The elders and venerables were tired of Black Diamonds, and Pomegranates, and all such fol-de-rol. Now the Queen must be wedded for sure and certain, so not only would

there be the elder brother, but also twenty princes of the realm to make the choice.

"Well," said the lad, laughing, "if the other adventures were difficult, this one at least is not; for what lover could not easily thus find his own maid? Surely, not one but twenty will there be to claim the Queen."

Now was the Queen no longer sad.

On the morrow the lad was astir early, and so it happened that, as he walked abroad and came to the hilltop, he saw the royal coach in the hollow and the maid stepping slowly through the door, after which she turned around and waved her hand. Then away galloped the horses.

Long the lad sat upon the hillside pondering the strange happening he had seen. Then he thought, mayhap the gardener's daughter is to stand in line with the Queen, and tumbling after that thought came another: "Mayhap she will be chosen by some prince, for even the Queen can not have a hand so fair as hers."

With this thought tingling in his brain the lad took his lute and set forth for the palace.

Meanwhile the Queen sat alone in the window of the music-room of the palace, gazing intently at her crystal globe, and there she saw the lad stepping along the highway and at last reaching the very gates of the palace. The masked musician in the outer hall watched her every move to find some hint or trick by which he might know her, for he was really the elder brother. Thus it happened that he did not notice the entrance of the lad, who was soon lost amid the throng. Meanwhile, preparations were made for the choosing, and away went the

"The Queen gazed intently at her crystal globe."

Queen to join the others. But on the way she whispered a word to the Prime Minister.

When the line was formed, out stepped the twenty princes and the elder brother. Out stepped also the lad, for that is the word the Queen had whispered to the Prime Minister. At home on his mantel was the fifth Pewter Candlestick, which would have given him the power of touch. But this, lover-like, he would have scorned.

Of course, he walked straight to the Queen and took her hand before the others had even time to guess which way to turn. And of course, when they unmasked, he thought she was only the gardener's daughter.

Well, after that they were wed, and spent their honeymoon at the little cottage, and lived and reigned happily ever after.

The elder brother and the princes each chose beautiful maidens, and they too were wed.

As for the Five Golden Candlesticks, I do not know what became of them, and, now that the tale is finished, if the title of a story came at the end in place of at the beginning, I would call it:

The Five Pewter Candlesticks.

Would n't you?

Hans *the Wise*

ONCE upon a time there lived a Little Soldier who went to the wars and fought so bravely that it is a wonder he was not made a General.

When the wars were over, tramp, tramp, tramp, shoulder arms, off he marched home again, through the town gates, through the town streets, and into the very presence of the King.

"Good day to you," said the King; "you have been a fine Soldier, for sure and certain. My Royal Treasurer will now pay you your wages, and you are free to go whithersoever you will — throughout this town, or the next, or the one over yonder."

Then the King led the way, and the Treasurer followed, and after him came the Soldier; and they all entered the royal treasury, where were great carven and painted chests of gold and silver and precious jewels. So many chests there were in that room, it would have taken three whole days to count one half of them, and a clever mathematician would be needed to accomplish even that.

"Help yourself freely," said the King. "Fill your pockets with gold and silver and jewels; and when you have filled your pockets, fill your hat."

Yes, the King said those exact words; for you see the Little

Soldier was of exceeding great bravery and had fought through the whole war, so the King, who was n't at all stingy, wanted to reward him generously.

"*Humph!*" said the Little Soldier. "Gold and silver and precious jewels are all very well for Kings and Queens, and folk who sit at home in silks and satins and do nothing but twiddle their thumbs; but of what good would they be to a Soldier who is about to start out and see the world? Would n't a body soon feel tired walking along the highway with his pockets full of heavy gold?" As for filling his hat, the Little Soldier would never think of doing that, for how could he wear his hat if it were full of gold, and was n't his hat made to be worn? And if he did n't wear it, would n't the hot sun beat down upon his bare head most uncomfortably?

The Little Soldier.

No, the Little Soldier did n't care for gold and silver and

precious jewels; so he thanked the King kindly, and said, if it was all the same to him, he would just take the nice round white pebble that was lying in the corner over yonder, and that would be wages enough and to spare.

Of course, the King was quite willing to give the Little Soldier the round white pebble, for, as oft happens with Kings and Queens, and sometimes with other folk, he was glad to have an excuse to keep his gold and silver and precious stones, though what good they did him, stored away in the carved and painted chests in his strong room, is more than I can guess.

Well, after that it was n't long before eyes front, one foot before the other, down the streets of the town, out through the gate of the town and along the highway marched the Little Soldier, whistling a jolly tune and as merry a body as one might ever care to meet.

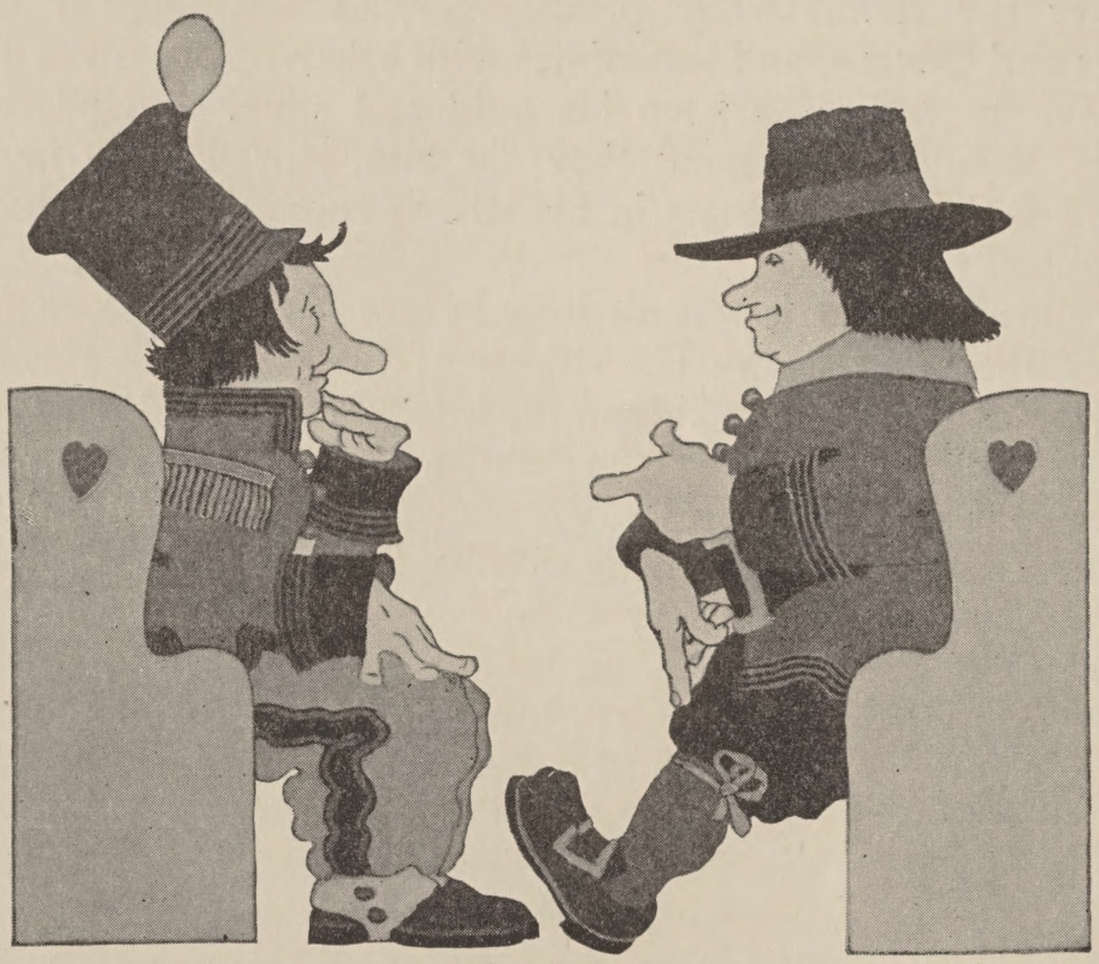
Not a penny did the Little Soldier have in his pocket, nor any other burden to carry upon his journey save only the round white pebble, which, no sooner did he reach the bridge that crossed a quiet pool than, *whisk!* away he threw the pebble, and watched it skip and dance across the water, making such ripples and circles on the still surface as were a joy to see. After that, the Little Soldier had not a single care or burden, and twice merry was the tune he then whistled.

As you will readily guess, the news of all this passed quickly from tongue to ear, so that ere the sun set not a soul in all that town, and but few in the town beyond, had not heard the news.

Such wisdom had seldom been known at that time, and whereas the Little Soldier's name was Hans, and his com-

rades called him Happy Hans, now folk named him Wise Hans, or more often Hans the Wise.

Now it happened that in those days in Noodleburg there lived a man named Peter, who had so much of this world's goods he was called Rich Peter.



The Innkeeper Gives Hans a Message.

Rich Peter had one son who was called Young Peter.

Also there was in Noodleburg at that time one Herr Kleimer, who had a daughter named Katrinka.

When he was but a lad, Young Peter had looked over the

hedge and seen Katrinka. After that he looked again and yet again. Then he went through the hedge and came to Katrinka and said, "How do you do?" And Katrinka looked up from her roses, not a bit surprised, and said, "How do you do?" Of course, they were soon good friends, and in a while it was whispered they were to be married.

Herr Kleimer did n't say no to that proposition, for Young Peter was as fine a lad as any in all Noodleburg. But — of Rich Peter it must be told he made such a wry face as I never want to see again, for he was stingy and thought, "Now will the lad be asking for a few silver pennies to set up housekeeping."

Thus matters stood when the Little Soldier reached Noodleburg. And of how he used his great wisdom to solve a difficult problem, thereby calling down upon himself the wrath of Rich Peter, and of how this helped Katrinka and Young Peter, you shall now hear, for it happened in this wise:

"Sir," said Jacob, innkeeper of the Black Cock, to Hans one day as the Little Soldier sat sunning himself on a settle beside the inn door, "Herr Kleimer has heard of your doings over the hills yonder, how you fought in the great wars, and of your clever wisdom, and yesterday he said to me, 'Jacob, if Hans the Wise comes stepping along this way, tell him I have a word or two for his ear.'"

"Good day, your Honor," said Hans, a few minutes later when Herr Kleimer answered his *rap-tap-tap* at the front door. "Friend Jacob, over the way —"

"Oh, yes!" said Herr Kleimer, interrupting; "you are Hans the Wise! Come right in; I have something to show you."

Through the house Herr Kleimer led Hans, into a big oak-paneled room where were windows overlooking the garden.

"Take a peek into the garden and tell me what you see," said Herr Kleimer.

"Oh," said Hans, "there are rows of hollycocks, beds of tulips, a few fruit-trees, a pebbled walk or two, and a bit of greensward — a fine garden, for sure and certain! Yet no fairer than many a one we have back yonder."

That is the way it was with Hans, who was always so proud of his own town he never could find its equal elsewhere.

"Look again," continued Herr Kleimer; "that is not all there is to be seen."

"*Prut!*" said Hans, laughing; "if you mean the lad and the maid in the arbor yonder, why, you may spy upon them yourself if you will; but as for me, I have other fish to fry, so I must be taking my cap and jogging along."

"Wait a while," said Herr Kleimer, not the least particle put out at the words of Hans. "You are for bringing your bread from the oven half baked. Listen: here is Young Peter coming to see my Katrinka one day a week for nigh a year, and only to-morrow they were to be married. Then what happens but a message must be sent me from Old Peter to say Young Peter is going to enter the army and so the wedding is off for a year, mayhaps two years, or even three. A fine state of affairs this is, and the cake all frosted and the guests invited!"

Hans rubbed his nose reflectively. "My, oh, my!" said he; "that certainly is sad. I wish the matter might be mended." Then he looked again at the lass, and could not

but see the tears in her eyes, and she so pretty it was all a shame.

"Ah!" said Herr Kleimer, "now you have found the plum in the pudding, and have but to pull it out. See. Rich Peter

Herr Kleimer Tells Hans His Trouble.

lives in that fine house in the hills just outside the town; and last night robbers came and stole away all his treasure. That is why he sends Young Peter to the army; he says the lad is now too poor to marry. Could we but capture the robbers

and get back the treasure, all would be well. You are a clever one, Hans; will you help?"

"Oh, yes!" said Hans, hurriedly. "Which way did the robbers run?"

Herr Kleimer looked troubled. "That I cannot tell," said he; "the soldiers have searched high and low, and no sign of the robbers can they find anywhere."

"*Humph!*" said Hans. "Now that is too bad. We cannot, of course, capture the robbers and get the treasure until we first find them."

Herr Kleimer opened wide his eyes and looked at Hans in wonder. "I never thought about that!" said he. "You certainly are a clever one, Hans! 'T is no marvel you are called Hans the Wise. Well, now, I suppose we shall have to give up!"

"Oh, no," said Hans, "we won't give up yet; for, as my Colonel used to say, 'it is never too late to try'; so I will just be stepping along to Rich Peter's house."

"No need to be stepping, Hans, when I have a fair coach in which you may ride. Wait a moment, and I will go with you."

So it happened, then, that ere long Hans was seated beside Herr Kleimer on the soft cushions of the fine coach and riding off to Rich Peter. Along beautiful roads they went, beside fields where the ripening grain bent to the breeze in long lines of rippling golden waves. Past fruit-laden orchards and around a little fringe of woodland the way led, coming anon into the fields surrounding the house of Rich Peter.

All this while, little had been the talk of Happy Hans, whose

mind was much on the matter before him. And to say he saw no solution of the problem is to tell only the truth.

"I wonder what is wrong ahead," said Herr Kleimer, as

The Farm-hands Meet with a Difficulty.

a bend in the road allowed of a sight being had of the gate to Rich Peter's, before which there was gathered an excited group of perhaps a dozen servants and farm-hands.

"We shall soon see," said Hans; and even as he spoke the coach drew near enough for them to hear some of the words that were passing to and fro from one farm-hand to another in the group about the gate.

How Hans did laugh then, when he had an inkling of the trouble! And while he laughed the coach stopped, and he and Herr Kleimer got out.

This is what had happened:

One of the farm-hands had just returned from the forest with a load of freshly cut bean-poles which were so long and protruded so far on both sides of his wheelbarrow that, try as he could, he could not wheel them through the gate.

That was a comical predicament for sure and certain, and Hans laughed until the tears stood in his eyes like great pearls.

As for Herr Kleimer, he was now quite provoked, and looking at Hans in surprise and wonder, he said:

"Why do you laugh, Hans? This is a serious matter. Here are such long bean-poles they won't go through the gate, and how is the man ever to get them into the garden? That is just like Rich Peter! He must always be saving and stingy, and here he has built the bricks of his wall so as to leave only this narrow gate. Now we must send for the carpenter to come with his saw and cut off the two ends of the bean-poles.

No, that would never do, said the farm-hand, for then the poles would be too short for the beans.

But for all Herr Kleimer and the farm-hand spoke so seriously, Hans never once stopped laughing. At last, however, he tried to speak. "*Ha, ha, ha!*" said he; "did ever a body see people so comical? And did ever a body see people so stupid! Oh me, oh my! such stupidity I never saw be-

fore! If the load of poles is so wide it won't go through the gate, why don't they tear down the bricks on one side of the gate and make the opening wider?"

For a moment no one spoke; everybody looked at Hans in wonder. Then one and all gave a mighty cheer, and next minute were working happily throwing down one brick after another as fast as ever they could.

Herr Kleimer, his lips trembling, and almost with tears in his eyes, now turned to his companion. "Hans," said he, "I humbly apologize; I humbly beg your pardon, and crave forgiveness for speaking as I did. Who besides a clever one like yourself would ever have thought of this fine way out of such a serious trouble? You have saved Rich Peter's bean-poles from being shortened and his farm-hand from a scolding. You certainly are a clever one!"

When Herr Kleimer said Hans had saved the farm-hand from a scolding, he told what he believed to be the truth. Imagine his surprise, then, a few minutes later, to see Rich Peter come tearing down the walk, waving his long cane and shouting loudly like a crazy person.

"Stop, you numskulls! Stop! Stop, you silly dolts! Why are you tearing down my beautiful wall? Who ordered you to ruin the front of my beautiful gate?"

Those were the words Rich Peter spoke, and never were orders more quickly obeyed. But they came too late, for now scarce one brick was left standing upon another, and that side of the gate seemed little better than a heap of rubbish.

"Who ordered you to do this crazy work?" again cried Rich Peter, as he came running up to his men, and brought down his cane so hard that, had the fellows not quickly scat-

tered, some one must needs have felt a warm whack dusting his jacket.

"I did," said Hans, speaking up boldly; "I bade the men tear down the wall."

"Yes," quickly continued Herr Kleimer, "and a clever idea it was too, Peter, as you are bound to admit when I tell you the load of bean-poles was too long to go through, and, but for Hans the Wise, might have stayed here in the road forever and a day."

Hans felt happy indeed, and proud also to hear these words of praise from Herr Kleimer, and sat with a stiff back and his head held high, never once deigning to look upon Rich Peter.

"Well," raved Rich Peter, still as cross as two sticks, "I do not know which is the craziest, you or Hans or the farm-hands; but I guess you all are buds on the same branch, and perhaps there are others in the world as stupid. But as for me, I would n't tear down the gate; I would merely turn the poles around and carry them through the gate lengthwise."

"My! my! yes, that is so!" said the farm-hands.

"Yes, that is true," said Herr Kleimer.

"Why did we not think of that ourselves?" said they all. All, indeed, except Hans the Wise, who was so proud of what he had done that, still holding his head high and looking neither to the right nor to the left, he heard never one single word of what was said.

"Well," spoke up Rich Peter, "the eggs are broken and can't be mended; so go in with the load; and, Herr Kleimer, will you be good enough to attend me to the house and remain to dinner? As for this crazy fellow whom you call Hans, my

servants can tumble him into the dungeon, and in the morning we will give him a warm birch twigging and send him off humping."

"Oho!" said Hans. "So that is the music to which I must dance, is it? And I am Crazy Hans, am I? Perhaps by and by you will think I am Clever Hans. I —"

But he did n't have time to say any more, for Rich Peter had already ordered his men to seize him; and the burly fellows, thinking haste might save them a good drubbing for their own part in the affair, quickly had him bound; and before he realized what had happened the key turned in the lock and there he was alone in the dark dungeon.

"Who would ever have thought a body could be so stupid?" said Herr Kleimer, forgetting how he had a moment before praised Hans for his cleverness.

"Yes," said Rich Peter, "there are certainly some very stupid people in this world." As he spoke he looked at Herr Kleimer and laughed.

"I wonder why Rich Peter laughs," thought Herr Kleimer; "perhaps it is because he is happy, or perhaps he has captured the robbers and regained the treasure. I will ask him."

But what Herr Kleimer had for an answer was only a shake of the head. No, the robbers were not captured, and by Rich Peter's glum looks he thought little hope existed of getting back his treasure. "The wedding must be postponed, Herr Kleimer," he said; "for now that Peter is a poor lad, he must enter the army and stay there until we have riches again, which, with a few good harvests, I hope will come soon. It is strange what can have become of the robbers, for, though

we have searched high and low, never a sign or a track of them can be found anywhere."

Rich Peter Displays His Wrath.

"That is too bad," said Herr Kleimer. "And now that Hans the Wise is in prison there is no more hope."

"Did you expect that simpleton to get back my treasure?" asked Rich Peter.

"Yes, I did," replied Herr Kleimer, "for in some ways Hans is very clever."

By this time they had entered the house and could smell the savor of good things a-cooking in the kitchen.

"I have a fat capon on the spit before the fire, Herr Kleimer," said Rich Peter; "soon we shall have dinner."

Meanwhile, Young Peter had bidden farewell to Katrinka and set forth for home, putting one foot before the other slowly, for so sad was his heart that his legs must needs lag.

Katrinka watched Young Peter until he was lost to sight on the highway, then, with tears in her eyes, she turned and entered the house, wondering if the lad would be killed in the wars, and if she would never see him again.

That was a sad way for two young people to be feeling on what should have been the eve of their wedding, and no mistake, especially with the cake all frosted and the invitations issued. There were some in the town that said Rich Peter was a hard, crusty old man, who might have shared what he had left with Young Peter, and so made the lad and lass happy; while others whispered that 't was likely Rich Peter had more than one penny left, and they even doubted robbers having taken any of the treasure, but thought Rich Peter had hidden it away, being too stingy to give any to Young Peter that he might marry Katrinka.

However this may have been I do not know, for 't is always so that there are some people must ever have a word or two to say on all such matters.

One thing was very true, however: the wedding must needs be postponed and pleading would be of no avail. No one knew this better than Young Peter, whose lagging steps brought him at last to the tumble-down gate.

"Oho! what has happened here?" said he, his surprise at the pile of stones making him for the moment forget his own troubles. Then he hurried off to the house and soon was hearing the whole story.

My, but Young Peter was provoked when he heard how Rich Peter had treated Hans! "Release him at once, I pray you, Father," he said; "he intended only help and not harm, and a shame it is to us for so treating him. Please release Hans, and I will myself go and rebuild what has been torn down."

That certainly was a very kind way for Young Peter to speak; and never even waiting for an answer, he set forth to begin the rebuilding.

Rich Peter pulled a wry face over these words, I can tell you, and it was plain he did not like the way matters were going.

"Hold, lad!" he called, leaping from his chair and running after Young Peter. "This is no labor for fine folks; I will have my men rebuild the gate in the morning."

Young Peter heard no part of what Rich Peter said, however, for already he was hurrying past the door and through the courtyard, reaching the gate before Rich Peter, followed by Herr Kleimer, had come from out the house.

Meanwhile, Hans was in the dungeon, wondering what would happen next. He did not know how to account for

such treatment. "That Rich Peter is certainly a numskull," he said, "but some time he —"

Hans did n't finish that sentence, for now there came a great racket of shouting and cheering outside, and the next minute the dungeon door opened and Hans found himself lifted to the shoulders of four stout men and borne out to the court-yard in triumph.

Now the first thing Hans saw was Young Peter dancing up and down like a crazy person, while in the arms of Rich Peter reposed the brass-bound treasure-box.

"Oh, Hans!" cried the happy Kleimer, running forward and grasping his hand, "you certainly were a clever one to order the tearing down of the gate. See! Young Peter found the treasure in a little hollow pit which had been dug just underneath the bottom bricks at one edge of the gate and so was completely hidden when the bricks were put back in place. This was where the sly robbers had concealed the treasure-box, and Peter never would have found it if you had not ordered the gate torn down. Now Katrinka can be married to-morrow!"

As Herr Kleimer predicted, so it happened, and as fine and happy a wedding that proved as ever a body would wish to see. Nothing there was too good for Hans, and every notable in the town was glad to shake his hand.

No one ever discovered the robbers, and Rich Peter never made much effort in that line. Indeed, there were some good folk who said he even forgot to thank Hans for finding the treasure; and any one with half a look could see how he had little joy at the wedding, so that Herr Kleimer's good dame

wondered would his sour face curdle the cream. However, Young Peter and Katrinka were too happy to mind that; and when they were happy, that was quite enough for one wedding, don't you think so?

Three—*and a Fourth*

IN days of old, when there were many brave knights who rode in tournaments and jousted for the favors of fair ladies, it was the custom for those who tired of such sport to ride out into the deep forests and through far lands over sea seeking new and strange adventures. Always when such a knight returned again into his own country and came within the walls of the king's castle, there quickly gathered about him the king and queen and all the lords and ladies of the court. Then the knight would relate the many strange happenings that had befallen him on his quest. That, indeed, was a fine custom, for in those days there were neither magazines nor books, and stories were known only by the spoken word and in lays sung by the minstrels.

Yes, indeed, that was a fine custom! But in the good town of Noodleburg there were no knights to ride in tournaments, and none to travel in far lands seeking adventure; there were only the merchants, the farmers, and such other peaceful stay-at-homes as are always to be found in every small town. All of this is just as true as that Granny Jones's black tabby has six white kittens; and a pity it is, too, for now the Mayor of Noodleburg steps out into the town square and vows and declares that if this was the custom of old, it should be the custom to-day, and that he would like to find a few stout lads to ride

out upon adventure and bring back such thrilling tales as would be well worth the telling.

One Little Policeman, One Fat Innkeeper, and One Tall Soldier Fare Forth upon the Adventure.

Well, in the end they searched here, there, and yonder, even to the uttermost of the four corners of the city, and this is what

they found: one little policeman, one fat innkeeper, and one tall soldier. These three they found, and these three said they were ready to fare forth upon the adventure.

Off the three started, as brave as ever went knights in days of old, and pretty soon came to the cross-roads outside the town.

One road led to the east, and on that road went the little policeman.

One road led to the west, and on that road went the fat innkeeper.

One road led to the north, and on that road went the tall soldier.

On and on they traveled — one on the road to the rising sun; one on the road to the setting sun; and one into the far country of ice and snow where the polar bears live. And whatever became of them I do not know, for never again were they seen in Noodleburg.

Then one day there came riding up to the Mayor a fine brave lad, astride a little donkey. His name was Boots.

Would the Mayor like to have him ride out upon an adventure?

"Why, yes." The Mayor was tired of waiting for the return of the three; he would now be glad to have a fourth.

So the lad, astride his little donkey, rode out upon the highway; and when he came to the cross-roads, he looked to the east, and said, "No, I won't go that road, for that is the way the little policeman went." Then he looked to the west and to the north, and to these also he said, "No"; for those were the roads taken by the innkeeper and the soldier.

"No," said the brave lad, "I will not ride to the east or the west or the north; I will ride only to the south." So he

turned his donkey around and rode off upon the south road, which led no other way than straight back into Noodleburg. And it was at home in Noodleburg the brave lad found his adventure; which, as Neighbor Brown tells me, is as oft might happen with many another lad if he but had one tenth part of the wisdom of Solomon.

" One tenth part of the wisdom of Solomon," said I; " why, that is more than is now in all the world, even if it were put together in one big pile! "

Don't you believe it? Well, listen:

When the little lad returned to within sight of the town gates, he said:

" If I ride straight into Noodleburg, folks will crowd about me and say, ' Here is Boots back again from his travels, with a tale to tell of his adventure; let us send word to the Mayor.' Which would be sad indeed, for not so much of an adventure have I had as might make a tale of three words, or even two."

Then he got down from off his donkey and let the beast crop the long sweet grass by the roadside and found a comfortable seat in the shade of an oak-tree. The sun was about at noon, so he felt in the pocket of his coat and found a bit of cold meat-pie and an apple, and he made of these as fine a meal as ever a hungry lad might tuck beneath his belt.

" It is yet so early in the afternoon," thought Boots, " and the sun is so hot that I will rest awhile before going farther on my travels; and no better place can I find for that rest than in the shade of this big oak."

So he stretched full length upon the ground, with his cheek in the grass, and would soon have been fast asleep but for this

strange happening: hardly did his ear touch the ground when he heard a tapping sound, such as might have been made by a beetle or some other big bug trying to escape, and a little voice, more tiny than that of the smallest baby, said:

Boots.

"Let me out! Let me out!"

Boots was on his feet in a jiffy; yet, look about as he would, nowhere could he see hide or hair of any living thing save only his donkey contentedly cropping at the wayside.

"Let me out! Let me out!"

And now the voice was so faint it could hardly be heard above the whispering of the breeze as it ran in gentle waves across the meadow to the wings of the great red mill, or the singing of the brook that tumbled lazily over the green and silver pebbles on its way to the water-wheel down yonder.

"Oh, ho!" said Boots, "I think you must be under the roots of this tree; I will just dig about a bit and see." So he dug and dug, until pretty soon he came to a flat stone; and on the stone there were carved such strange characters as Boots had never seen in any of his school-books, or even at the big library up in the village. This is no wonder, either, for the characters were written by King Solomon the Wise, and signed with his great seal. What they said, word for word, I do not know, but what they really meant was neither more nor less than just this: he who found that stone, if he were wise would straightway cover it up again and look no farther; and especially, he should never lift it up and uncover the brass bottle to be found underneath; and under no condition should he open the brass bottle.

Yes, that was the meaning of those strange characters written on the stone; but Boots did not know that; and if he had known, I half suspect he would have looked anyway, which, for that matter, is no more than you or I or Neighbor Brown would have done had we been in Boots's place.

"Let me out! Let me out!"

And now the voice was harsh and querulous and well nigh as big as Boots's own. Then up came the flat stone, and up came the brass bottle, and nearly was the bottle opened when Boots thought:

"Maybe there is something to be gained from not burning my fingers by being in too much of a hurry." So he said: "Wait a bit! Wait a bit! Perhaps I will let you out, and then again, perhaps I won't. But first of all we must make a bit of a bargain."

Well, there were few words lost on that proposal, and in a moment off came the top of the brass bottle, and out upon the ground jumped a Little Mannikin dressed all in scarlet.

"My! Oh, my!" said the Mannikin, "but I am stiff and sore, and every bone in my body knows a different ache. For three thousand years I have been imprisoned in that brass bottle with no room to move about, or stretch my legs, or find any comfort whatsoever."

"Well, now at last you are free," said Boots, "and it is time to pay the score."

Yes, the Mannikin would do that; for it was good to be free again, to breathe the fresh air, and to feel the warm sun upon one's back after so long a time in the cold earth. See! Boots was just to take a green oak-leaf, and do so and so, and there would be as fine a suit of clothes as he could ask for; and then if he would dig a bit under the oak-tree, he would find a chest of gold and silver coins, enough to make him rich all the days of his life.

That was the bargain Boots had made with the Mannikin, and it was n't long before he was wearing his new clothes and kneeling before a chest of gold and silver money. Then his eyes were near popping out of his head, for never before had he seen so much wealth.

With his pockets stuffed full of gold, Boots was soon on the road into Noodleburg, and trudging at his heels was the Little

Mannikin; for that he should go, too, was part of their bargain.

Now you must be told that on this very morning the Mayor had drawn a hundred gold dollars from the bank and had placed them in a bag upon the shelf in the pantry. Then straightway he forgot where they were; and when he went to look and could not find them, such a hue and cry he set up as

"Never before had he seen so much wealth."

brought the goodwife and servants into the room to learn what it was all about.

"I have been robbed of a hundred round gold dollars!" cried the Mayor, excitedly. "Go hunt for the thief!"

So it happened that when Boots reached the main street of Noodleburg, folks were all bustling about, and crying:

"Catch the thief! Catch the thief!"

Then, as you will quickly guess, they soon spied Boots.

And no sooner spied him than they saw his pockets bulging with gold dollars.

"Here is the thief!" they all shouted. "Boots is the thief!"

Then straightway they led him before the Mayor, and in the end the Mayor had Boots's gold dollars, and Boots was cooling his heels in jail. And all of this had happened in spite of the fact that Boots told the Mayor about the Little Mannikin and the chest under the oak-tree.

Some folks who stood by said it was a pity to see the little lad marched off to jail, and one of these, a tall lanky fellow, even went so far as to say he believed Boots was telling no more than the very truth; and as for himself, he was going to follow the Mannikin and ask a question or two of his own.

Then off he stepped at a lively pace to the jail, and there was the Mannikin astride a black cat, riding up and down in front of the building, and all the children laughing and thinking it the greatest sport ever seen.

Well, it did n't take much coaxing until the Lanky One had the Mannikin off on a side street. Then, was it true that he could do so and so and so and so? Yes, the Mannikin could do all that and more too. All right; if that were so, the Mannikin could just fetch a fine meal, for the Lanky One was hungry. Nothing could be easier. And there before them was a smoking capon, juicy and tender, and as sweet a morsel as ever came from Dame Gretchen's oven.

And just such another capon as this Dame Gretchen was at that very moment placing upon the table for her goodman's dinner. Then she went to the cellar to draw a mug of cider, and, in that nick of time, in at the door came the black cat; and

when it went out again, in its mouth was Dame Gretchen's capon.

My, such a hue and cry as there was then in that house!

"A thief has stolen my capon! Catch the thief!"

Those were the words that came flying out of the window. And, of course, every one thought the Lanky Lad was the thief; so his hands were bound behind his back and off *he* was marched to jail.

"There was the Mannikin

Just as Boots had told about the Mannikin, so also the lad told, but no more came of it than just that the Mayor thought he would find out a thing or two for himself. Then off he stepped through the town, and out of the town gates, and along the highway until he came to the oak-tree, where, when he had dug about a bit, he found the chest, just as Boots had buried it.

Meanwhile, affairs were moving at a lively pace in Noodleburg, for the Chief Jailer had vowed and declared how the two thieves would have to be beheaded. Yes, he had sent for

the Lord High Executioner to come with his big sword, and already that dread official was on his way. No wonder there was excitement in the town, and no wonder Boots wished he had never dug up that flat stone and opened the brass bottle! Of course, Boots and the Lanky Lad did n't know that already the Mayor had learned the truth; and anyway, it was a long journey from the oak-tree back to the town, and the Mayor was fat and could n't walk very fast, so like as not he would n't arrive in time not to be too late.

When the Mayor reached the edge of town, whom should he meet coming out of the gate but the Little Mannikin. "Oh, ho!" said he. "Is it true that you can do all these wonderful things that have been told of you?" Yes, it was true the Mannikin could do that and much more, and now would the Mayor like to see some of his tricks? Certainly, the Mayor would like to see what the Little Mannikin could do. "Look," said he, "over yonder is a simple lad trying to catch fish in a pail. Have you power to make him catch a sea-serpent?"

astride a black cat."

My, how the Little Mannikin laughed! Could he make the simpleton catch a sea-serpent? Just watch and see!

So they went over to where the simpleton was trying to catch fish in a pail. But I, for one, wish the Mayor had gone

straight to the jail and released Boots and the Lanky Lad, for now the Lord High Executioner had his sharpened sword on his shoulder and was stepping along lively toward the jail. If Boots and the Lanky Lad were looking out of the window and saw this sight, they must have been terribly frightened.

"'A simple lad trying to catch fish in a pail.'"

However, it did n't take the Little Mannikin long to do his trick; and it did n't take the Mayor long to get back into town. No wonder was that, either; for such a terrible sea-serpent as came out of the simpleton's pail was enough to frighten any one and make him run fast, even though he were twice as fat as the Mayor, which would be very fat indeed.

"Cut their heads off!" yelled the Chief Jailer.

"That I will," answered the Lord High Executioner, and he raised his sword for the blow.

"Stop!" shouted the Mayor, almost out of breath from his

long, fast run. "They are both innocent; give them their freedom."

So Boots and the Lanky Lad were allowed to depart. As for the Mayor, he found his gold dollars on the shelf in the pantry, just where he had left them, but the goodwife Gretchen never again saw her fat capon. Whatever became of the Lanky Lad I do not know, but at least I am glad he was not beheaded.

When Boots came again to the edge of town, there was the Mannikin sitting on a rock and grinning contentedly. And now the Mannikin would go along with Boots as they had bargained in the beginning. It was easy to see that Boots little liked that idea, but a bargain was a bargain and he did n't say no. So the two trudged along the highway — first Boots, and at his heels the Mannikin; and not one word did either say to the other until they came once more to the big oak.

By this time it was evening, and the oak had its top in the last slant rays of the setting sun, while at its base the shadows were so cool and so inviting that Boots said he would lie down and take a bit of a nap, for certainly he was tired from all the happenings of that day in Noodleburg.

Yes, Boots was for taking a nap; but first of all, he would like to know if it were true, as folks said, that the Mannikin had conjured a fat capon for the Lanky Lad and had frightened the Mayor with a great sea-serpent.

Oh, the Mannikin had done all this and more too. Was there anything else Boots would like to know?

Why, yes; Boots had been thinking and wondering how the Mannikin ever could have squeezed his body into that small

brass bottle, which was no more than six inches high; and now, if the Mannikin would be so kind, Boots would like to see him do that trick again.

Such an easy trick as that the Mannikin could do in a jiffy; it was too bad Boots did n't ask something more difficult.

"The Lord High Executioner was stepping along lively toward the jail."

Look! the Mannikin would jump into the bottle and out again, and perhaps by that time Boots would think of something else to have him do.

Well, quick as a wink into the bottle jumped the Mannikin, and quick as a wink Boots clapped on the cover. My, what a fuss the little fellow made then! He kicked, and scratched,

and shouted, and made such a time that there was nothing to be done only for Boots to bury him under the flat stone on which was the seal of Solomon.

Then Boots stretched out on the soft grass and went to sleep and did not wake up again until the next morning. After he had rubbed the sleep from out his eyes he thought of the chest and the gold dollars. " I will put a few of the coins in my pocket," he said; " they will come handy over in Noodleburg."

But for all Boots searched here, there, and yonder, no sign could he see of the chest. Then he said, " Oh, well, if I cannot find the chest, I will just free the Mannikin until he gets me some more gold dollars."

Certainly, that was the thing to do; for it would be foolish to go into Noodleburg with no gold jingling in one's pocket when gold was to be had merely for the asking.

Well, just as happened with the chest now happened with the bottle; up and down and all around Boots searched, but never again did he see the Little Mannikin.

A good thing this was, too; for no telling what might happen if the little fellow were wandering around free in this big world. Yet if ever I went to sleep beneath that oak-tree and heard a tapping such as Boots heard, I would dig about a bit; and if I found the stone I would lift it up; and open the brass bottle, just as Boots did.

So I say again that in all the world there is not one tenth part the wisdom of Solomon, even if it were put together in one big pile.

Snip *and* Stitch

SNIP and stitch, snip and stitch; the same to-day, the same to-morrow; that is how it was with the Little Tailor, all day long and every day. Yes, snip, snip, snip; through the cloth he would ply his great shears; then stitch, stitch, stitch; through the cloth he would ply his needle; and always his eyes twinkled and he hummed a lively tune, for he was young and jolly and thought this world a fine place in which to live, especially as he heard the goodwife stepping about in the kitchen, and could smell the cabbage broth a-boiling on the fire for his dinner.

Well, when the Little Tailor and his wife had been married about a year, there was born to them a fine son; and when they had been married about two years, there was born to them another fine son; and because they had found no name for the first son, now they found it no easier to name the second.

"See, Wife," said the Little Tailor, "our two lads we will call Snip and Stitch, for better names than those we cannot find in all the length and breadth of the land."

So Snip and Stitch the two lads were named; and Snip was the elder and Stitch the younger.

Then the days slipped merrily by, and after the days, the months, and after the months, the years, and when a score had run their course, the Little Tailor said:

"Wife, now has come the time when we may buy a cow and a pig and a few chickens and settle down on a bit of farm-land, for we have worked long and faithfully to that

The Little Tailor.

end and there are enough gold dollars on the shelf to pay the score."

Yes, the goodwife would do that, for no one likes to abide forever in one spot; but see, how about the two lads Snip and Stitch?

Oh, the Little Tailor had thought of all that. There were

one or two round gold dollars that could be spared for the lads; then, too, there was the shop where they could continue the tailoring and earn a fair living.

Well, when the hand-shaking was over, and the good-bys said, and the two lads were at last alone in the shop, said Snip the elder to Stitch the younger:

"Brother, we now have the shop and three gold dollars; but as for me, I would not forever sit cross-legged upon a table and stitch seams, as did our father, neither would I ply the shears all day long, snip, snip, snip the cloth for other folk's raiment. No; there is better than that to be had out in the big world if one but has the wits to find it."

Stitch thought that might be so. "But," said he, "though much may be gained, so, also, much might be lost; and what is good for father is good for son; so I for one will just remain at home and do the tailoring."

In that nick of time who should come riding up to the shop but a messenger from the palace. The King had stepped on the hem of his best purple robe and had torn it badly. That was what the messenger said; also he told how the royal tailor could never mend the tear to the King's satisfaction. And now would Snip or Stitch come and try his hand at the job, for the King expected company that evening, and nothing would do but he must wear the robe?

Snip looked at Stitch, and Stitch looked at Snip. At last Snip said:

"Brother, all that is now wanted is merely mending. Go you to the palace and ply such a nimble needle that mayhap the King will order a *new* robe. Then it is I who will serve him, and in such a fine manner as to make our fortune, for at

cutting and shaping of robes in the latest fashion there is not my equal in all the realm."

"Who should come riding up to the shop but a messenger from the palace."

Stitch thought there were others who might have something to say on that matter; but he took the suggestion kindly, and

said nothing more than bid the messenger lead the way.

When Stitch reached the palace, he was not long in mending the robe; and when he had finished, so well had he done the work that if any one was ever pleased, surely that person was the King. Nothing now was too good for a reward, and in the end the King took Stitch into a fine room where on a carved oaken table stood two square caskets, one of which was all of gold, beautifully carved, and the other was of pewter, quaintly hammered.

" Choose," said the King, pointing to the caskets. " Choose one of these as your reward for mending my robe; and whether it be the gold one or the pewter, you are full welcome; and with the casket go my thanks."

" *Oui!* " thought Stitch; " if I choose the gold casket, it may be full of jewels, enough to make me rich all the days of my life; and certainly that would be well worth the choosing. On the other hand, if I choose the pewter casket, it may be empty; but even thus, it will be all the mending was worth and more too. Also, it will be such as a tailor may keep in his shop with no fear of robbers." Then to the King he said: " I will choose the pewter casket, Your Majesty, and thank you for your generosity, for of much more worth it is than my little mending."

When Stitch reached home, no sooner had he placed the pewter casket upon the floor than a shadow crossed the threshold, and there in the doorway stood Snip.

" And what is this you have here, Brother? " said Snip.

Oh, so and so, and so and so; just a pewter casket the King had given him. That was what Stitch answered Snip, and in the end he told the whole story.

How Snip did fuss and fume!

Was Stitch such a numskull as to choose a pewter casket when he might have had a gold one? Did any one ever have such a stupid brother! Well, as for him, never would he remain and work in the shop with such a noodle! No, he would just take as his share of the business the three gold dollars, and go out into the world to seek his fortune.

"And may good luck be your way-fellow," said Stitch.

"And may much profit come of your pewter casket," said Snip. For now that he had the three gold dollars jingling in his pocket he was not in such a huff. But his words came from his teeth only, and no good-will was there back of them.

Thus they parted, and in a while Snip was but a speck on the brow of the hill where the highroad dipped into the next town. Then Stitch put the pewter casket on the shelf and climbed upon his bench, where he sat cross-legged and let his needle run merrily in and out of the cloth and along the seams that went to the making of a fine garment.

"What was in the pewter casket?" you ask. Well, that I don't know, for neither Snip nor Stitch had thought to lift the lid and look. But there the casket rested on the shelf, making such a brave showing in the little shop as might be well worth more than one look by any one who chanced to be stepping that way. And on the morrow there was one who did step that way, and this one was no less a person than the Burgomaster.

My, how the Burgomaster did stare when he saw the pewter casket! You see, once he had been invited to the palace, and had seen the casket beside the gold one on the oak table, and now as plain as two and two make four, the King must have given the casket to Stitch. And if the King did that, of course

the King must be a special friend of the tailor. Yes, all of that was perfectly plain; and as the Burgomaster needed some new clothes, why, he would just patronize Stitch. And when he paid for the clothes, he would n't fuss and fume and say the bill was too high, as was his usual custom; no, he would slap Stitch on the back and tell him the fit was fine, and then he would pay a gold dollar more than asked; for it would be well to be liberal and open-handed with one who was certainly a friend of the King.

"The Burgomaster walked out of the shop with a proud stride."

All of these thoughts passed through the Burgomaster's mind in that short space of time while he was looking at the pewter casket; and no longer time did it take him to order a new suit, which in the end he paid for just as he had planned. Nor did he even wait for the tailor to send a bill, but threw the gold dollars down upon the table with the merriest kind of a jingle, and, staff in hand, walked out of the shop with such a proud stride that he who looked once must needs have looked again, for the new suit was of velvet and silk and as fine a sight as might be.

One there was, too, who *did* look; he was a swordsman in the King's Guard, and as dandy and dashing a fellow as had ever found favor among the fine ladies of Noodleburg. He was in love with Kassy, the Burgomaster's daughter, and when he saw the Burgomaster walking so proudly out of the little

"Such a gallant showing the swordsman made in his new clothes."

tailor-shop, he twisted his mustachios to the sharpest points and thought: "What is good for a father-in-law is good for a son-in-law. I will patronize the same tailor." Of course, he only thought this, and did n't say it out loud; for he was not yet the Burgomaster's son-in-law, but only hoped to be.

Well, as it went with the Burgomaster, so it went now with the swordsman of the King's Guard; and just as he stepped across the threshold into the little shop Stitch had lifted the lid and was dropping the Burgomaster's golden dollars into the pewter casket.

When the swordsman's suit was finished, he too paid liberally, for it was easy to see that Stitch was a friend of the Burgomaster, and as such, there would be no harm in having his good-will.

Such a gallant showing the swordsman made in his new clothes as he came out of the shop and flashed his sword in the sun that no wonder he caught the eye of the King's drummer; and no wonder the King's drummer was lost in admiration of such glorious raiment.

" I need a new uniform, and this is where I will buy it," said he; and the next minute he was following his big drum through the doorway into the shop.

Yes, the tailor would make a new uniform for the King's drummer; but wait a minute, there was something else to be attended to first. And as he spoke Stitch dropped into the pewter casket the gold dollars that had been paid him by the swordsman of the King's Guard.

Certainly never before nor since was there heard in Noodleburg such a tune as the drummer beat upon his big drum when he marched out of the shop in his new uniform. And of course, when a drummer is beating a fine tune, especially upon a big drum, every one will be looking in that direction.

Yes; every one looked at the drummer in his new uniform; but the first to look was the grocer.

" My, but Stitch is prosperous! " thought the grocer. " I

will just give him extra measure and hold his trade, for where he trades, there others will trade also." And while the grocer was filling his basket the little tailor was adding to the gold

"'I will just give him extra measure and hold his trade,' said the grocer."

dollars in the pewter casket those which had been paid him by the King's drummer.

After this the days jogged along busily and there came not a one in which Stitch did not lift the lid of the pewter casket to drop in a fat round coin or two; and but seldom did he lift the lid to take one out, for not only did his trade thrive, but

butcher, baker, farmer, and miller all served him liberally and charged lightly.

Well, as has oft been said, "Where there is fire, one must expect smoke." So in the end, what with folk buzzing here and gossiping there, some word of Stitch must needs reach his father and mother on the farm. Then straightway into the town they both came and to the little shop where, when the greetings were over, his father would have Stitch tell him about the visit to the King and the present of the pewter casket.

"The drummer beat upon his big drum when he marched out of the shop."

"And, Stitch, what did the casket contain?" asked his mother.

"I do not know," answered Stitch; "I never looked."

"It is not too late; let us look now," said his father.

So they put the casket upon the floor; and whereas one had placed it on the shelf, now it took two to take it down. Then they lifted the lid, and, wonder to behold, the casket was full of gold and silver coins to the very top!

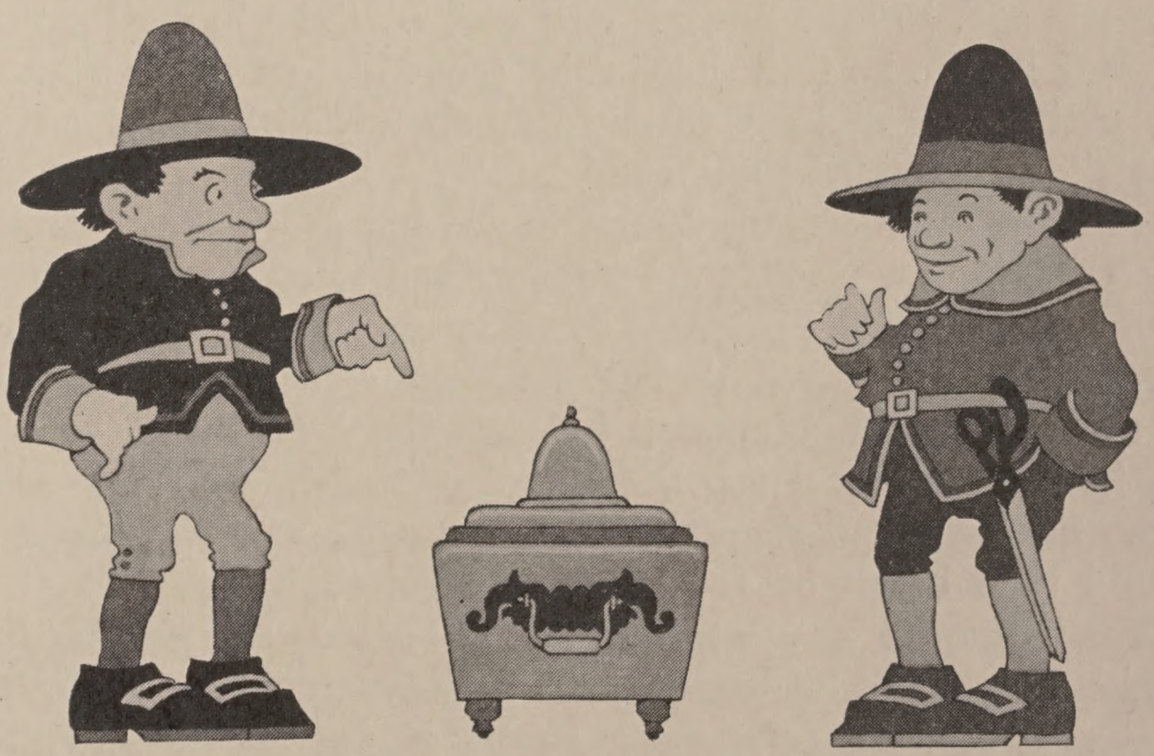
"That is a fine gift to come from the King, just for mending his torn robe!" said his father.

" Yes, indeed it is! " said Stitch.

But his mother only smiled and said nothing, as often happens with mothers when fathers and sons are uttering words of wisdom.

Of course every one in Noodleburg agreed with Stitch and his father that the pewter casket was a fine gift to have from the King, and I think so too.

As for Snip, his three gold dollars did not take him very far out into the world, and when he heard about the pewter casket being full of gold and silver coins, he quickly put one foot before the other on the road for home. If Stitch ever took him back into the business and gave him any of the coins, that was his own affair, and is n't told in this story.



Nip *and* Tuck

ONCE upon a time in Noodleburg there dwelt a rich merchant of whom it was said that not in a whole week could one count all the coins that were his.

Also at this time there lived in Noodleburg a miller, who day in and day out ground corn for his neighbors.

One daughter the merchant had, as fair and beautiful as might be found in a day's tramp. And as for the miller, he had one son, so kind and jolly he was well liked by all.

Now it is to be told that in the front hall of the merchant's house there stood a suit of battered armor, with one hand outstretched and at rest upon the hilt of a long sword. Where this armor came from I do not know, but there are some who say it was once worn by a crusader in the Holy Land, and others who whisper that it possessed some occult power and even could foretell the future. This I do know, however, that each day, as the rich merchant passed through the hallway on entering his home, he would rap the armor with his cane and ask it some question, whereupon it would rattle, and the merchant would then laugh or frown as best suited his mood.

Well, upon a day when the miller's lad, astride his little donkey, delivered his bag of meal to the merchant, and *rap-tap-tapped* at the back door, no one came to answer. So he lifted the latch and went inside. When he had placed the bag upon the table and could hear no one stirring about, he thought it

no harm to look here, there, and yonder and see the sights in such a fine house. So it happened that he went into the hallway, and when he saw the suit of armor, straightway there popped into his mind the thought:

"Why not put on the armor and ask it to tell my fortune?"

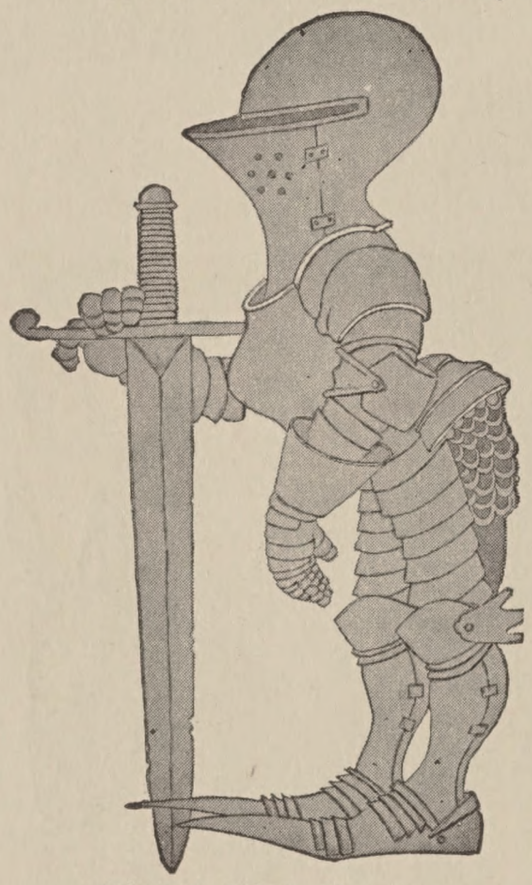
That would be something worth the doing for sure and certain, and soon the lad was unbuckling the straps and getting into the armor. No easy task this proved, either, but in the end it was accomplished, and the lad was safe and snug inside with his two eyes looking out through the slits in the headpiece. What he saw gave him such a start he nearly tumbled clattering to the floor, for his eyes were looking straight at as pretty a maiden as a lad's eyes ever looked upon.

The Miller's Lad.

Just then there was the sound of a key in the lock, and the front door opened, and in came the merchant. On a peg he hung his hat, and with his cane he whacked the armor over the shoulders. Then he looked upon the portrait of his pretty daughter, which hung upon the wall opposite, and

rubbed his chin, and looked at the armor quizzically and said:

"Who is to marry my daughter?"



The Knight's Armor.

And the frightened lad inside the armor thought the merchant said:

"Who is hiding in my armor?"

And all in a tremble he answered:

"Only the miller's lad."

My! If one could only have seen the merchant when he heard those words come faintly out of the armor's head-piece. First he turned white as a turnip, then red as a beet; then he fussed and fumed and roared and raved, and, without waiting to take his hat from the peg, went stamping out of the house and hotfoot off to the miller's.

As you will quickly guess, no sooner did the front door close than the miller's lad was getting out of the armor and hurrying through the back door. But for all his haste, he took time for one glance at the portrait, and thought that never in all the world might one ever find a lass so lovely.

Whatever happened to the rich merchant at the mill and what he said to the miller I do not know, but so white were his coat and trousers with meal-dust and so rumpled his hair when he came out of the mill that 't is likely the miller was more than his match.

After this it was n't long until a word or two reached the

townfolk, and in the end, when they had the whole story from first to last, even the farmer's yokel laughed and thought it all a good joke.

Of course this was n't very pleasant for the merchant; neither did it please the maid; though, truth to tell, she had seen the lad more than once and liked his looks, and so told her father. This did not mend matters you may be certain, and now nothing would do but the maid must be sent over hill and dale into a far country where, in a Walled City of Many Towers, with a gate of heavy planks before which two soldiers stood guard, she was kept secure. So the weeks slipped by and the months, and when a year had passed on a day the miller's lad said:

The Pretty Maiden.

"Father, I would go out into the world and see new cities; for now I am tired of Noodleburg and wish much to try my fortune in other lands."

Yes, the lad might do that; the miller would n't say no to such a plan; and here were a few round coins that could be spared from their savings. Then he bade his son good-by, and the lad walked out into the big world.

Only a short way had he gone when whom should he meet but the rich merchant! Where was the miller's lad going now, all dressed in his best clothes? That was what the merchant wondered, and he followed the wondering with asking.

When he had the answer, he screwed up the corner of his mouth and thought, "Perhaps he will reach the walled city and win my daughter." Then he invited the lad to his house and wrote a long letter, and in the letter he said that he who received it should take the lad and clap him into prison, with iron chains upon his wrists and ankles, and nothing to eat but dry bread, and nothing to drink but water; and furthermore, he was to be confined in a pitch-black dungeon, with damp, cold walls, and pools of water on the floor, and rats and mice for company.

The Farmer's Yokel Laughed.

Yes, every word of this the merchant wrote in a letter, and he sealed it, and wrote on the outside a name and address. Then he gave the letter to the lad, and a few coins to pay for the trouble, and asked him to kindly stop on his journey and deliver it.

This the lad promised to do; and when he looked at the letter, he saw the name was that of the Lord High Constable, and the address was that of the Walled City of Many Towers.

Now we will leave the miller's lad on the road to the Walled City of Many Towers, with a merry whistle running over his lips, and the letter tucked away safely in the pocket of his coat. Never would he have stepped along so lively, and never would he have found such joy in his journey had he known the con-

tents of that letter; for no pleasure would it ever give any one to be stepping, one foot before the other, straight into the damp, dark walls of a dungeon.

But, as Mother Pfounce used to say, "much may happen 'twixt cock-crowing and hen-roosting." So now we will take up the story where it tells of two brave soldiers.

One of these soldiers was called Nip. He was a cavalryman, and he rode a mighty war-horse that had carried him safely through many a terrible battle. His sword was so sharp and glistened so in the sun that no man might look upon it without fear, and the enemy sundered right and left whenever it saw him riding the field of battle.

The Cavalryman.

The other soldier had for his name Tuck. He was an infantryman, and wore a big black hat and carried a powerful gun. Fully as brave he was as Nip, but having no steed to ride, he did not make such a grand showing on the battle-field; neither was he such a famous leader, for, in very truth, Nip was a captain and commanded a whole company of cav-

alrymen, all brave and glorious in smart uniforms, vizored caps, and great boots.

Now Nip and Tuck were great friends and such close chums that, when the wars were over and each had received his wages and could hear it jingling in the pockets of his trousers, Nip said to Tuck:

The Infantryman.

"Comrade, let us set forth into the wide world and seek adventure, and perhaps we shall find something more worth the seeing than is to be found in this town or on any field of battle."

Yes, Tuck liked that idea all right; but see, Nip had a prancing steed to ride and Tuck had none.

Oh, that would be easily mended! Nip was not so selfish as to want to ride while his chum walked. They would just change about; first Tuck could ride a way and Nip would walk, and then Nip would ride and Tuck could walk.

Tuck thought that would be very nice if he were only a brave cavalryman; but never in this world would he dare to mount a prancing steed. No, his own two legs must carry him on any journey he traveled in this world, and never would he ride on four legs.

Nip laughed heartily at these words of Tuck, and being a jolly soldier and not set on forever having his own way, he marched off to the horsemarket. When he came out of the market again, there were two more round dollars jingling in

his pocket, and his good horse was eating oats in a stall and waiting for a new master.

Well, after this the two soldiers started on their journey, and at whatever joke Nip made, Tuck laughed full heartily, and at the jokes of Tuck, Nip laughed merrily, which is as it should be with two chums traveling upon a journey, even though some of the jokes are silly, as I have no doubt they were with Nip and Tuck.

Of all the adventures these two had there is no space to tell here; but one there was that more than twice has given me a good laugh, for it was recorded at the time in a big book, and there can be no doubt of its truth.

This is the adventure:

Upon a day, after Nip and Tuck had stepped along for many a mile, they stopped in front of an old inn, and there, sound asleep on a bench, was a young lad, barefooted and with tattered and torn garments.

Only one look the two jolly soldiers gave the lad when into their throats jumped their two hearts, and they stuttered and stammered and scarcely knew what to say, for never in all the days of their lives had they even seen any one who looked so tired and hungry.

Straightway Nip's hand went into his pocket, and straightway Tuck's hand went into *his* pocket, and any one who was there and heard the pennies jingle would have heard a merry tune; and any one who saw the dancing eyes of the two soldiers would have seen a happy sight; for any one, with half a look, could tell that the tired, hungry lad was about to have a fine meal; and any one could easily guess he would no longer have to tramp the stony roads barefoot.

Well, everything happened just as it should, and, as Mother

Pfounce often says, "There is no sight in all this world one half so fine as seeing a hungry lad get a good meal." And of all such sights, none could ever be finer than that which now made happy the eyes of Nip and Tuck.

When the meal was finished and the new shoes comfortably fitted, Nip asked the lad where he was bound, and in the end had the whole story from the very beginning up to the present; and also he had in his hand the letter addressed to the Lord High Constable of the Walled Town of Many Towers.

Nip Tells a Story.

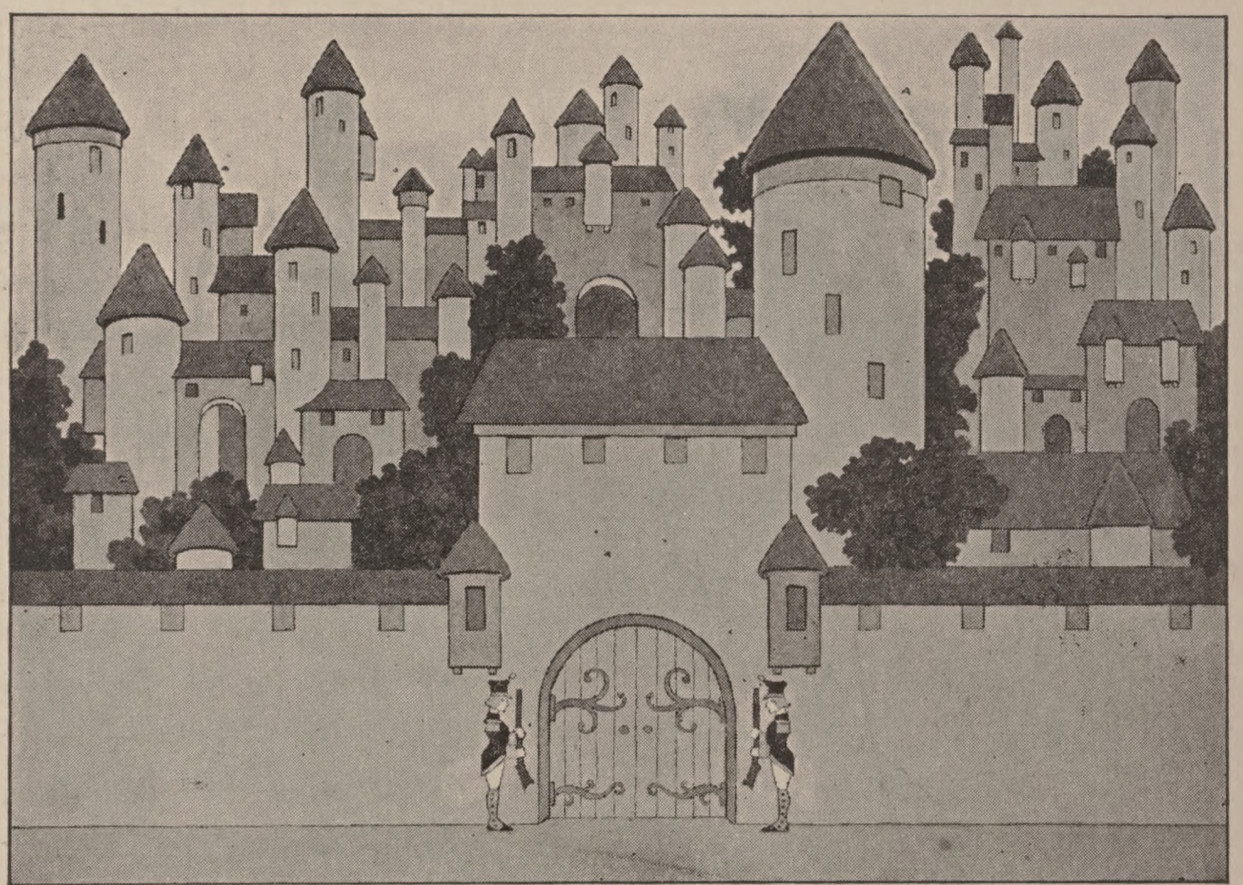
Yes, the tired, hungry lad was the miller's son.

Now you may be certain that two jolly soldiers traveling here, there, and yonder, always ready to tell a good story, and always ready to be told one, could not have gone far upon their journey without hearing how the armor had answered the merchant. Also, you may be sure, that often they had a good laugh over the wrath of the rich merchant when he learned that his daughter was to marry the miller's son.

Yes, all of this they had heard, and also how it had been many a day before the rich merchant had dusted all the corn-meal from out his clothes after that encounter with the miller; and having heard all this, they could not but wonder what might be in that letter which the lad was carrying, for, putting

this and that together, they thought him a strange messenger to be chosen by the merchant.

Now, as oft happens, it is but a short road from wonder to answer; and so no long time passed now until Nip knew all that the merchant had written. After that it was n't long until,



The Walled City of Many Towers.

with the help of Tuck, Nip had written another letter and signed and sealed it just as was the original; and on it he wrote the same address.

As for the miller's son he knew nothing of this change of letters, and when he stepped forth again upon the highway, he thought it was the merchant's letter he bore in his pocket.

And when at last he reached the Walled City of Many Towers and was ushered into his castle, he thought it was the merchant's letter he placed in the hands of the Lord High Constable.

When the Lord High Constable read the letter, there was a jolly smile upon his face, and he took into his own and warmly shook the hand of the lad, for the letter said:

"Marry this lad, at once, to my daughter."

And it was signed by the rich merchant.

The Trumpeter.

Some time, if you chance to be traveling near Noodleburg, you will probably find Nip seated upon a stool in front of some jolly company telling the story of how the Miller's Lad married the Rich Merchant's Daughter. And when he finishes, you will hear Tuck say:

"And after the marriage, and as the town trumpeter was proclaiming the news throughout the city, who should appear riding through the gate but the rich merchant?"

Then Nip will say, "And that was a sight well worth the seeing, as Tuck and I know, who were there to hear him fuss and scold."

And then Tuck will say, "But anyway, the two young people did n't care; they were happy, and lived happily ever after."

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